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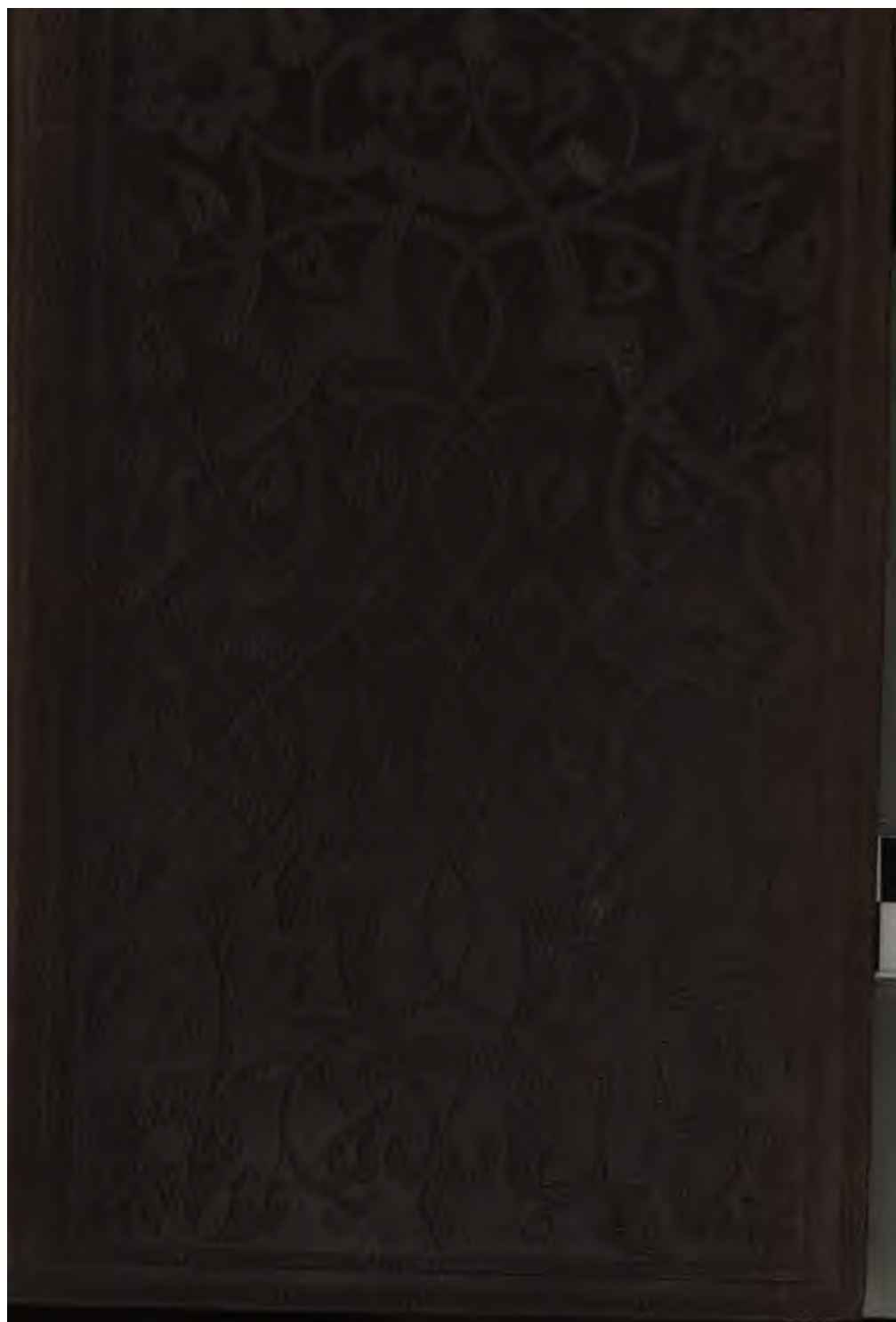
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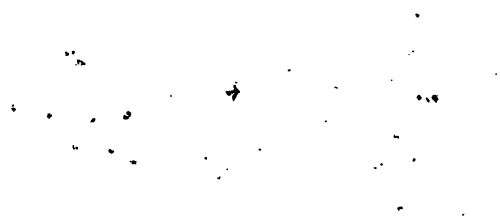




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Entry of James V. into Edinburgh.—p 2

JANE SEED.

THE HISTORY OF HER LIFE.



VOL. II.

LONDON: PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.



JANE SETON.

BY

JAMES GRANT, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF ROMANON OF WAR, AIDE-DE-CAMP, &C



VOL. I.

LONDON:

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & CO FARRINGTON STREET.



Entry of James V. into Edinburgh.—p. 2



JANE SETON:

OR,

THE KING'S ADVOCATE.

A Scottish Historical Romance.

BY

JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF

"THE ROMANCE OF WAR," "THE AIDE-DE-CAMP,"

ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON

G. ROUTLEDGE & CO., FARRINGDON STREET

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PREFACE.

THE genius of a monarch is said to stamp a character upon his time ; but this can scarcely be said to have been the good fortune of the sovereign in whose reign I have laid the following romance.

Like all the princes of his house, James V. was far in advance of the age in which he lived ; for to all his forefathers' valour and passionate love of their native Scotland (for whose soil so many of them had shed their blood in battle), to their elegant taste in all the arts, their patronage of science and commerce, he united a love for romantic adventure, which, like James IV., made him the idol of the people. But the Scottish nobles, though affording us many bright and glorious examples of high valour and pure patriotism, have generally been a race of men too ready to sacrifice the dearest interests of their country for lucre or ambition ; and were really, in all ages, a curse alike to our kings and the nation.

In the following pages I have endeavoured to portray something of their savage pride and unscrupulous spirit ; and to give a picture of those dark days of

violence when danger was the pastime and arms the occupation of our people; when it was sadly but truly said, that grey hairs were seldom seen under a Scotsman's bonnet, and that a Scottish mother had seldom a son left to lay her head in the grave, for in civil strife or foreign war they had all gone before her to the land of the leal.

There is much that is veritable history, and much that is old tradition, woven up with my fiction; and though the reader may be able to distinguish these passages, I shall mention, that the king's adventure in the cavern, the *three* trees of Dysart, and John of Clatto are ancient legends of Fife; while the point on which the whole story turns—the strange and frantic love of Otterburn—is taken partly from an incident mentioned in the annals of the House of Angus, and which bears a conspicuous place in the early criminal records of Scotland. It will be found related at further length in the notes.

The King's Advocate was so named, to distinguish him from the Crown Prince's Advocate, an office which existed before the abolition of many of those more important public institutions of which Scotland has lately too tamely permitted herself to be deprived; thus affording—unless her people shake off their political lethargy—a most dangerous precedent for the destruction of the College of Justice itself.

The King's Advocate, with whose name I have made so free in these volumes, was the son of Thomas Otterburn of Edinburgh, who was slain at the battle of

Flodden, and of Katharine Brown. He was Lord Provost of Edinburgh from 1524 to 1535, and was our ambassador to England between the same years. He was knighted in 1534, but was imprisoned in the castle of Dunbarton for being too partial to Englishmen. He was highly esteemed by Buchanan, who has embalmed his memory in beautiful Latin verse.

Vipont, the hero, bears an old Scottish surname, which was famous in the middle ages, though it has now almost disappeared. Andro Wyntown, the Prior of St. Serf, mentions that *Alan ye Vipownt* was keeper of Lochlevin, and defended that fortress valiantly in the wars of the Scottish succession. Another, Sir William Vipont, was one of the two Scottish knights slain on the glorious 24th of June, 1314. They were barons of Aberdour on the northern shore of the Forth, where their ruined castle, a massive pile indicative of great strength and ancient grandeur, is yet to be seen. Roland Vipont is meant to represent the last of that old race, whose arms are still recorded to have been six annulets *or*, with a swan's head rising from a coronet.

Let it not be thought that I have made James V. or his minister speak too harshly of Henry VIII.'s moral character, when we bear in mind that Dr. Bayley, in his "Life of Bishop Fisher," has plainly asserted and proved, that the English king married Anne Boleyn, knowing her to be his *own* daughter. So much for the "Bluff King Hal" of romance.

If, on one hand, I have omitted to portray the Cardinal Primate as the monster we have been taught

to believe him ; I do not, on the *other*, wish it to be thought that I consider the good Father St. Bernard as a type of the Scottish clergy in 1537. Very far from it ; they were the reverse of all I have made that meek old priest. But, doubtless, there must have been exceptions ; and it must be remembered, that all our accounts of them and the Cardinal have come down to us from their enemies.

A Scottish novelist labours under a great disadvantage, when endeavouring to introduce effectively for English readers old national characters who speak their own language, which to a modern Englishman would be as unintelligible as Choctaw ; hence the conventional half-dialect usually adopted. It is a curious fact, that in the days of Alexander I. or Robert I., the dialects of the two nations were more alike than what they are *to-day*. Since then, the language of south Britain has gradually been changing, and becoming what is strictly termed *English* ; while the gothic dialect of the north has remained pretty much the same ; hence the Scot can read with ease, and fully understand, the obsolete phrases and idioms of Chaucer, Spencer, Shakespeare, &c., many parts of the old editions of whose works are now almost unintelligible to the mass of their own countrymen.

EDINBURGH,
1st January, 1853.

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. JANE SETON	1
II. MAGDALENE OF FRANCE	13
III. THE MASTER OF THE ORDNANCE	28
IV. REDHALL	41
V. THE WITCH-PRICKER	47
VI. THE ILLUMINATED SPIRE	54
VII. TWO OFFICIALS	66
VIII. THE QUEEN'S MASQUE	74
IX. LA VOLTA	87
X. LOVE AND ABHORRENCE	98
XI. SWORDBLADES AND SALVE	110
XII. EDINBURGH IN 1537	117
XIII. SAINT GILES	127
XIV. THE CHANCELLOR OF SCOTLAND	140
XV. THE NOON OF LOVE	147

CHAPTER	PAGE
XVI. VIPONT'S HOUSEHOLD	159
XVII. A LORD ADVOCATE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY	171
XVIII. THE CASTLE OF INCHKEITH	181
XIX. THE FORTUNATE SWORD THRUST	193
XX. THE BLACK PAGE	202
XXI. JOHN OF THE SILVERMILLS	214
XXII. TEN RED GRAINS	228
XXIII. THE FIRST VISIT	236
XXIV. THE KNIFE	249
XXV. DOUGLASDALE	259
XXVI. THE BARMKYN OF CAIRNTABLE	265
XXVII. THE POMMEL OF THE PONIARD	281
XXVIII. A DRAUGHT OF WATER	290

JANE SETON:

OR,

THE KING'S ADVOCATE.

CHAPTER I.

JANE SETON.

"I prithee mark
His countenance: unlike bold calunny,
Which sometime dare not speak the thing it looks,
He dare not look the thing he speaks, but bends
His gaze on the blind earth."

THE CENCI.

ON the 19th of May, 1537, the bells of Edinburgh rang joyously. It was a day of loyalty and merriment such as never more may gladden Scotland's ancient capital.

After a nine months' absence, James V.—"the good king James, the commons' king, the father of the poor, the patron of the infant arts and sciences, the mirror of chivalry and romance," as he was affectionately named by a people who idolized him—had arrived in the Firth of Forth with his young queen Magdalene of Valois, whom for her dazzling beauty he had chosen from among three princesses, all possessed of unusual charms, and whom he had espoused in the great cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris, in presence of her father, the

magnificent and magnanimous Francis I., seven cardinals, and all the noblesse and beauty of France. After spending the honeymoon at the Hôtel de Cluny, a beautiful old gothic house belonging to the family of Lorraine, they had sailed for Scotland.

All the capital was on tiptoe, and its streets were crowded to excess by the retinues of the nobles and lesser barons, who had come thither to gratify their curiosity and evince their loyalty on the auspicious occasion.

The day was one of the most beautiful of all that sunny month; and the summer air was laden with the perfume of flowers, for garlands and bouquets were festooned from window to window across the main street leading to the palace, a thoroughfare six-and-twenty yards in breadth; while the stone columns of the girth-cross of the holy sanctuary, the Jerusalem-cross of St. John, the great market-cross of the city bearing aloft the unicorn rearing on a tressured shield, and the famous stone statue of Our Lady which then stood at the east end of St. Giles's church, were all wreathed and hidden under the spoil of a hundred blooming gardens.

Scaffolds and balconies hung with tapestry and rare carpets of foreign manufacture, or painted with azure, starred with shining gold, occupied the sides of the streets in many places, and were crowded with the families of the surrounding landholders, the better classes of citizens, and the baronial dwellers of the Blackfriars' Wynd and the Canongate; a great part of the latter street consisted then of turretted villas, and strongly-built but detached mansion-houses, surrounded by spacious gardens. Banners innumerable, bearing the heraldic cognizances of the proud, the noble, and the brave of Scotland's ancient days, waved from window, turret and

bartizan; the city mountains poured forth purple wine and nut-brown ale alternately (for the Scots had the former duty free before the Union), and the stalwart deacon convener of the gallant craftsmen, sheathed in complete armour, with the famous Blue Blanket, or banner of the Holy Ghost, displayed, mustered the Baxters, the Websters, Cordiners, Dagger and Bonnet makers, and other ancient corporations, each under their several standards, to line the High-street, on either side, from the Butter Tron to the Netherbow, keeping clear a lane of some forty feet in breadth. These stout craftsmen, who mustered to the number of several thousands, were all arrayed in green gaberdines, red hose, and blue bonnets, and were armed as archers, with a steel gorget, a short but strong Scottish bow, a sheaf of arrows, a battle-axe, and long dagger.

With the city sword and mace, and his own helmet and banner borne before him, the Lord Provost, Sir James Lawson, of the Highrigs, with all the baillies and burgesses clad in gowns of scarlet, furred with miniver, and wearing chains of gold; the heralds and pursuivants in their plumed bonnets and gorgeous tabards, with standards and trumpets, musicians, minstrels and macers, waited at the western entrance of the city to receive the king and queen with all due loyalty and splendour of pageantry; while the priests of rank, the knights, nobles, and senators of the College of Justice, had all ridden to Leith to conduct the royal pair in procession to Holyrood.

It is said that the beautiful Magdalene, on landing from the high-pooped and gaily-bannered ship of Sir Robert Barton, the king's admiral, knelt gracefully down on the sands of Leith, and lifting a handful to her lips, kissed it ere she threw it away crosswise, and raising her

large dark eyes to ~~look up at~~ God, the blessed Virgin, and all the saints, for the happiness of Scotland, the land of her adoption, and its people."

The bright sunshine of the glorious May morning, poured aslant its flaky radiance between the breaks and openings in those irregular masses of building, that tower up to such a giddy height on both sides of the central street of the ancient city; the south was sombre and grey, but the north was glowing in warmth, as the sunlight played along its far-stretching vista. Many of these houses were flat-roofed, flagged with large stones, like ancient towers, or covered with thatch; but few that overlooked the pageant about to be described are standing now, as the city was fired by the English in eight places seven years after, in the war with Henry VIII.

By the skill of a certain cunning craftsman, the High-street, even at that early period, was well paved; and the monks of Holyrood kept the Canongate (which is but a further continuation of the same thoroughfare) well causewayed, for which the Reverend Lord Abbot levied a duty upon every cart, laden or unladen, which entered the eastern barrier of the burgh. All the open windows of that great street, the tall edifices of which rise to the height of eight and ten stories, exciting still the astonishment of every traveller, were filled with glad faces; every bartizan, outshot, and projection bore its load of shouting urchins; even the leads and parapets of the great cathedral, with its hideously grotesque stone-gutters, carved into devils and dragons, wyverns and other monsters, bore a freight of spectators, the buzz of whose voices, above and below, imparted a liveliness to

the scene, and relieved the tedium of long expectation and waiting for the approach of the royal party.

The utmost good-humour pervaded these expectant crowds, though sometimes a brawl seemed likely to ensue, when a gentleman of pride and pedigree, with velvet cloak, a long rapier, and tall feather, despising the authority of the convener and his bands of mechanical craftsmen, marched down the centre of the street, with a few well-armed serving-men following doggedly at his heels, with brows bent, their swords girt up, and that expression on their faces which seemed so much as to say, "We are Humes, Douglasses, or Scotts, or Setons, and who will dare to meddle with us!"

With these, such was the patent of gentle blood, the burgher archers dared not to interfere; but their unstrung bows and gauntleted hands pommelled without mercy any luckless countryman or denizen of Leith or St. Ninian's Row, who encroached on the causeway, which by order of the knightly provost was to be kept clear by all. Such incidental brawls were generally quelled by the interference of some passing grey friar or Dominican.

Those cavaliers who assumed the right of perambulating the open street were, as I have said, almost invariably attended by bands of followers, armed with swords and round targets, steel caps and corselets. Several of these were invariably greeted by a yell of hostility and epithets of opprobrium from those who occupied the windows, and who found this a more safe experiment than it could have proved to those who stood in the street below.

These obnoxious personages were generally lesser barons and gentlemen of the house of Douglas, a clan

which, from its numerical force, pride, power, and turbulence, had long been inimical to the house of Stuart, and more especially to James V., who after many efforts had completely broken its strength, reduced its numerous strongholds, and driven the chief, Archibald sixth Earl of Angus, and Knight of St. Michael, from his high offices of Lord Chancellor and Lieutenant of the East and Middle Marches, with all the noblesse of his surname and faction, to exile in England; where, like all Scottish rebels and malcontents, according to the ancient line of southern policy, they were fostered and protected by Henry VIII.

By the knights and gentlemen of the proscribed name those marks of hostility from the vulgar herd were treated with silent scorn; but their followers scowled about them with clenched weapons and kindling eyes, that showed how intensely they longed to react the great High-street conflict of 1520, and revenge on the rabble of Edinburgh the insults they now endured. These evidences of hostility and political disgust were soon lost amid the general spirit of rejoicing that pervaded the entire body of the people; for loyalty and devotion to their old hereditary line of princes was then an inborn sentiment in the Scots, who were devout believers in the divine right of kings, and had not yet been taught by their preachers to view their old regal race as tyrants and oppressors.

Among all this mirth and festivity there were two persons whose sobriety and staidness of demeanour were very remarkable.

One was a young man about six-and-twenty, who had, apparently, just entered the city, for his boots and leathern gambadoes were covered with dust. He wore

a plain gaberdine, or frock, of white Galloway frieze, with horn buttons; but beneath it appeared a doublet of escaupil to protect him from sword thrusts, an unusual garment for one of his class, for his grey maud, or plaid, blue bonnet, backsword, and hunting-knife, announced him a yeoman or agriculturist. He carried a great knotty walking-staff, recently cut from some wayside thicket; but to a close observer it would have seemed perfectly evident that the profusion of his beard and moustache was worn rather for disguise than adornment. He was reading a paper affixed to the cross of St. John of Jerusalem, which stood in the centre of the Canongate, immediately opposite the arch which now gives admittance to St. John's-street, the ground of which was then closely built upon.

It was a proclamation, issued by the nobles who governed in the king's absence, offering a thousand merks of Scottish money for "ye heid of Archibald Seton, umquhile Earle of Ashkirk," accused of leaguings with that false traitor, Archibald Douglas, sometime Earl of Angus, who had recently been on the borders, at the head of some English moss-troopers, infesting the bounds of the knight, Sir Mark Kerr, of Cessford.

With a brow that loured, and fierce eye that kindled, the young man read, from beginning to end, this proclamation (which was obnoxious to so many), and his hand gradually tightened on the handle of his poniard as he proceeded. Suddenly remembering that he might be observed, a smile of scorn, such a lordly smile as never clown could have given, spread over his dark features; he gave a glance of peculiar import at a group of ladies who occupied a balcony immediately opposite St.

John's Cross, and, drawing his bonnet well over his brows, looked round for some obscure nook from whence to see, in security, the progress of the royal pageant.

"How little can they imagine that *I* am so near them," said the Earl of Ashkirk (for the stranger was no other than he), as he dived among the crowd and disappeared.

The other personage to whom reference has been made, was a tall and finely-formed man, of a noble presence and commanding stature, possessing a remarkably handsome face, with a loftiness of bearing that never failed to strike the beholder with interest. His complexion was dark, his nose slightly aquiline, his eyes black, and sparkling beneath two brows that were almost joined together. At times, a fierce and restless expression lit up these fiery and penetrating eyes, and knit his smooth expansive forehead, while his moustachioed lip curled with pride and severity; and then a languor and sadness stole over them, as other and softer emotions subdued the bitter thoughts some passing incident had roused. He was dressed in a doublet and trunk hose of black velvet, laced and buttoned with silver, and trimmed with miniver; a black velvet bonnet, adorned by a single diamond and one tall white ostrich feather, shaded his dark, short, curly hair. He wore a short poniard and long rapier in an embroidered belt, and had spurs, heavily gilded and embossed, on the heels of his maroquin boots.

This man was Sir Adam Otterburn, of Redhall, the King's Advocate in the recently-instituted College of Justice, a great favourite with his royal master, and one who, for his learning, probity, courage, and effice, was loved by some, respected by many, and feared by all. His features were pale and hollow, for he was recovering

from a late illness, brought on by a wound received in a conflict with the Douglasses, a circumstance which alone, on this auspicious day, confined him to a cushioned chair at the window of his house, which overlooked the High-street, where all the beauty and bravery of Edinburgh had thronged to welcome home King James.

Oblivious of the bustle pervading that long and stately thoroughfare, the streaming pennons, the waving banners, the gaudy tapestries and garlands that festooned every balcony and decorated every window, the Knight of Redhall continued to gaze upon the fair occupants of the temporary gallery which we have before mentioned as standing near St. John's Cross.

It was hung and canopied with scarlet cloth and festoons of flowers; the front was painted with gold and azure, and thereon lay a banner, bearing under an earl's coronet, and within a widow's lozenge, the three crescents of Seton, within a double tressure, flowered and counter-flowered with golden fleurs-de-lis, quartered with "the bloody heart," the dreaded cognizance of the obnoxious Douglasses—a badge, which though it seldom gained love, never failed to inspire fear. An old lady and several fair young belles, whose beauty alone saved them from the insults which popular hatred levelled at all in alliance with the exiled Earl of Angus, occupied this balcony, and reclined beneath its shady canopy, chatting gaily, and expectant of the royal approach.

The elder lady was Margaret Douglas, of the house of Kilspindie, dowager of John Earl of Ashkirk, and mother of Archibald, the present earl, who was then under doom of exile with Lord Angus, his kinsman and ally. The younger ladies were Jane Seton her daughter, Marion Logan of Restalrig, Alison Hume of Fast-castle, and Sybil Douglas of Kilspindie, all noble

damsels, who had come to Edinburgh to witness the splendid entrée of Queen Magdalene.

Tall in stature and dark in complexion, with deep black eyes, and a hauteur of brow, which the sweet expression of her mouth alone relieved, the Countess Dowager of Ashkirk, though all but unable to read or write (for letters were then held in low repute), was a woman of a shrewd and masculine turn of mind; for the inborn dignity of noble birth, the martial spirit of her race, and the stormy life she had led since childhood among feudal brawls and intestine battles, had imparted an emphatic decision, if not a fierceness, at times, to her manner and modes of expression. A stiff suit of the richest Genoese brocade lent additional stateliness to her figure, while the diamond-shaped head-dress then in fashion for noble matrons, added greatly to her stature, which was far above the middle height. The inner folds of this angular coif were of white linen, the outer of purple silk edged with yellow fringe, and it formed a corner at each ear with an apex at the top, while the folds lay close to her cheeks, scarcely permitting her hair to be visible, and where it was so its raven hue seemed turning fast to silver-grey.

A little negro boy, black as Lucifer, but dressed entirely in a rich suit of white satin, puffed and slashed at the trunks and shoulders, held up her train. Ugly as a fiend, with a broad nose, capacious mouth, and long pendant ears adorned with massive silver rings, Master Sabrino, being the first or the second person of his colour ever seen in Scotland, was an object of fear to some, disgust to others, and wonder to all. The vulgar viewed him as an imp or devil incarnate, and studiously avoided the glance of his shining black eyeballs; but *the creature*, as they termed him, was affec-

tionately devoted to his mistress, and to all who used him kindly. Though the fashion of being attended by a black page or dwarf was not uncommon at continental courts, and had been first introduced into Scotland by Anne de la Tour of Vendome, Duchess of Albany, it did not tend to increase the popularity of the proud and distant Dowager of Ashkirk, whom, as a Douglas, the people were generally disposed to view with hostility and mistrust.

Lady Jane Seton was, in many respects, the reverse of her mother ; for she had neither her lofty stature, her keenness of eye, nor her haughty decision of manner ; for her figure, though full and round, was, by turns, light, graceful, and yielding. Neither her youth, for she was barely twenty, nor her beauty, though it was of the first class, were her chief characteristics. There was a depth of expression in her dark blue eye, which, by turns, was dreamy and thoughtful, or bright and laughing, a charm in her radiant complexion and a fascination in her manner, which drew all instinctively towards her. . When silent, she seemed full of intense thought ; when speaking, all vivacity and animation. Her hair was of the darkest and glossiest brown, and her neck arched and slender. Simple and pleasing, sinless in soul and pure in heart, her goodness and gentleness were her greatest charms ; and though she appeared *petite* beside her towering mother, there was a grace in all her movements, and a bewitching piquancy in every expression, that made Jane Seton adorable to her lovers, and she had many.

Her companions were worthy the association, all fair and handsome girls.

Alison, of Fastcastle, was a beautiful blonde ; she carried a falcon on her wrist, and from time to time

pressed its smooth pinions against her dimpled cheek. Marion, of Restalrig, was a tall, flaxen-haired, and blue-eyed beauty, ever laughing and ever gay ; while Sybil Douglas, of Kilspindie, was a brunette like all the beauties of her house. Her deep black eyes and sable tresses would have lost nothing by comparison with those of Andaluçia ; and though generally quiet, and, as some deemed her, insipid, her silence concealed a world of sentiment and thoughts that were exquisitely feminine ; but though silent and retiring, there were times when this fair daughter of the house of Douglas could manifest a fire and spirit becoming Black Liddesdale himself.

They were all dressed nearly alike, in white satin, slashed at the breast and shoulders with variously coloured silk, and all had coifs of velvet squared above their temples, and falling in lappets on their cheeks. They were all talking at once, laughing at everything, like Sabrino the page, whose wide mouth was expanded in an endless grin ; but the old countess was buried in thought, and with her forehead resting on her hand, and her elbow on the edge of the balcony, continued to gaze abstractedly on the long and bustling vista of the sunlit Canongate.

CHAPTER II.

MAGDALENE OF FRANCE.

"Saw'st thou not the great preparatives,
Of Edinburgh that famous noble town ;
Thou saw'st the people labouring for their lives,
To make triumph with trump and clarion :
Thou saw'st full well many a fresh galland,
Well ordered for receiving of their queen,
Each craftsman with his bent bow in his hand,
Right gallantlie in clothing short of green."

LINDESAY OF THE MOUNT.

"THEIR graces tarry long," said the countess, glancing impatiently up the street ; "it is almost midday by the sun. Jane, child, hast got thy pocket dial about thee?"

Lady Jane took from her embroidered girdle a little silver dial, and placing it duly east and west, found the hour to be twelve by the shadow of the gnomon, for the sun shone brightly.

"I warrant me," said the countess, "that his eminence the cardinal will be relieving himself of some prosy oration at the foot of the Broad Wynd, for the benefit of the king's grace."

"Of the queen's, you mean, Lady Ashkirk," said Alison Home, "for his lordship is a great admirer of beauty. Thou knowest, cousin Jane, how often he hath admired thee."

Jane coloured with something of displeasure at this remark, for, by the rumour of his gallantries, to be admired by this great prelate was no high honour.

"I would the king were come, for my patience is wearing fast away," said she, raising her bright eyes from the silver index to her mother's thoughtful face.

"Is it for the king alone thou art so impatient, child?" said the old lady, with a keen but smiling glance.

"Nay, for one who accompanies him—for the queen," said Jane, growing pale, for she always turned pale where others grew red. "Is not James the avowed enemy of our house?"

"But is there no other for whom ye long, silly lassie?" asked Marion Logan, throwing an arm round Jane.

"My sweet friend—yes; for one who is dearer to me almost than thee; he who sent me this dial from Paris. Oh, Marion! to think that he hath been there for nine weary months!"

"Marry, come up, bairn, what matters it?" said the countess, who overheard them, though the two fair friends spoke in low tones; "he will be so changed, and improved in gallantry and grace, that you will scarcely recognise him."

"I cry you mercy, mother," said Jane, pouting; "I knew not that he required improvement in either."

"By my troth, lady countess," said Alison Home, "if you mean Sir Rowland Vipont, the Master of the King's Ordnance, I think him so finished a cavalier that no court in Europe could improve him more."

"Save the court of king Cupid," said Marion.

"And where does he reign?" asked Jane.

"In thine own heart, cousin," said little Sybil, quietly, and then all the girls laughed aloud.

"I thank you, sweet Alison," said Jane, in a low voice, kissing her friend, for her heart danced lightly to hear her lover praised; but dost thou know that though I am full of joy, I would give the world to shed a shower of quiet tears just now."

"Heaven give thee happiness to-day, dear Jane," replied her friend, in the same soft, earnest voice, "and may it send thy lover back to thee in love and truth, and health and comeliness, as when he left thee these nine long months ago."

"Sabrino," said the countess, suddenly; "prick up those long ears of thine! dost thou not hear the sound of trumpets?"

"Ees, madame—me tink so," grinned the sable page, whose efforts at articulation cost him a frightful grimace.

"Then, James must be ascending the West Bow," replied the countess, as a commotion and murmur became apparent among the mighty masses that crowded the whole street.

At that moment the roar of the castle artillery pealed over the city, and announced the entrance of the king by its western barrier, along the Highrigs, past the tilting ground and the chapel of the Virgin Mary. Deeply and hoarsely carthoun and culverin thundered from the towers of St. Margaret and King David, and a deafening shout of welcome and acclamation resounded from the crowded streets.

"Though the enemy and oppressor of the Douglasses and the Homes," continued the countess, standing up in front of the balcony, "I cannot forget that he is our

anointed king—that he has long been absent, and has endured great perils by sea and land; and so this day I bid him hail and welcome home in the name of heaven.”

“’Tis said the queen will ride behind him on a pillion,” said Alison Home.

“Nay, child,” replied the countess; “the Master of the Horse passed up street with a beautiful palfrey of spotless white, having a golden footcloth that swept the ground, for her grace’s especial behoof. Ha! bairns, the mention of pillions remindeth me of the days of our good King James IV. I was but a lassie then, in my teens, like yourselves; and when James espoused the younger sister of Henry Tudor, though liking not the English match, I was appointed a lady of honour to Queen Margaret, for then—(and the countess spoke bitterly)—*then* to be a Douglas was different from what it is to-day! Like his son, James IV. was then a winsome youth, and fair to look upon. Few matched him for courage and hardiment in the field, and none surpassed him in grace and courtly devoir. Amid a gallant band of spears, with ladies, lords, and knights, all clad in silk and taffety, laced and furred with miniver, with many a waving plume, and many a golden chain, they issued forth from Saint Mary of Newbattle, beneath the old oak trees, and James had his fair young English bride behind him on a pillion, riding just like any douce farmer and his gudewife, and, certes! a bonnie young pair they were as ever had holy water sprinkled on their bended heads! James was bravely attired—a doublet of velvet bordered with cloth of gold, and his bride was blazing with diamonds. As we rode townward, by the wayside, near our Lady’s Well at Kirk Liberton, we saw a fair pavilion pitched on the green brae side, and at

the door thereof stood a lance fixed in the earth, with a shield hung upon it. A lady, holding a siller bugle horn, came forth to greet the royal pair, when suddenly a savage knight, mounted, and clad in a lion's skin, dashed out of a neighbouring coppice and bore her away. Then, lo ! another knight, armed at all points, spurred his fleet horse from the gay pavilion, and assailed him with uplifted sword. Bravely they fell on, with the captive dame between them, and the keen edged blades made ilka tempered casque and corslet ring like kirk bells on a festival. The rescuer struck the sword from the hand of his enemy, the king cried, ' Redd ye, sirs !' and so the combat was closed, and the lady released."

" And who was this fair dame?" asked Alison, with assumed curiosity, for she had heard the same story, in the same words, a hundred times before.

" Whom think ye, but *I* ; and my leal Lord Archibald was the errant knight who saved me from the savage warrior, and *he* was no other than thy father, dear Alison, Sir Cuthbert Home of Fastcastle, who died by King James's side at Flodden ; for you must know, maidens, that it was all a fair masque prepared to suit the warlike taste of the king, who loved well to see his knights under harness, and proving their hardiment on each other's coats of mail. All that and mickle mair I remember as if 'twere yesterday, and now 'tis three and thirty years ago. Three and thirty !" continued the garrulous old lady, " how the false traitors Death and Time have changed my cheer since then."

" True, madam," said little Sybil, thoughtfully ; " the best part of our life is made up of the anticipations of hope, and the pleasures, the sad pleasures, of memory."

" Thy thoughts are running on my son, Lord Archibald," said the countess, with a fond smile, as

she smoothed the thick tresses of Sybil. "The first is for the young like you, and the last to solace the auld like me. St. Mary keep us! how year runs after year. My fair bairns, I hope a time may come when ye will all look back to *this* day as I do to that; but not with a sigh, to think such things have been, but can never be again!"

The countess sighed, and a tear stole into her eye; but a cry from the girls of—

"Oh! here they come—the king and queen!" followed by a clapping of hands, and a burst of acclamation from the populace, amid which the old cry, which the Scots had lately borrowed from their allies, the French—"Vive la Roynie! Vive la Roynie!" was conspicuous. It was a shout that rang from the crowded streets below, the windows and bartizans above, loud enough to rend the summer welkin, and heralded the approach of James and his French bride.

The occasional flourish of trumpets, mingled with the sound of the drum, the shalm, the cymbal, the clarion, and the clang of hoofs, rang in the lofty street. Spears glittered, banners waved, and silken pennons streamed in the sunlight at a distance, above the sea of heads; while armour flashed, and embroidery sparkled, as the superb procession, conveying the royal pair to Holyrood, approached.

Under the high sheriff of Lothian and Sir Andrew Preston of Gourtown, a strong body of mounted spearmen, sheathed in dark armour, cleared and lined the streets, while the provost, Sir James Lawson of the Highrigs, chequered them with several thousands of the burgher archers and craftsmen, for each armed corporation was arrayed under its own pennon; and the great consecrated standard of the city, bearing the

image of Saint Giles, floated near the battlements of the Cross—as tradition avers it floated over Salem. A volume would be required to describe the magnificence of the romantic pageant that now approached; for James, as I have said, was the idol of his people, and a nine months' absence had endeared him to them more; and all their loyalty and enthusiasm now blazed forth at his return. First came three hundred of his royal guard, clad in blue bonnets and scarlet doublets, armed with long partizans and poniards. These were all men of Edinburgh, given by the city to attend James “on all occasions, especially against his auld and auncient enemies of England.” Then came a long train of that fierce and proud nobility whose turbulence and intrigues ultimately broke the good king's heart. They wore robes of state over their rich armour; their jewelled coronets were borne before, and their gallant banners behind them; each was attended by a knight, a page, an esquire, or other gentleman, in accordance with his rank. Then came the lesser barons, each riding with his pennon displayed; and then the honourable commissioners of burghs, clad in gowns of scarlet, with gold chains; the twelve heralds and pursuivants, with six bannered trumpets, sounding before them a triumphal march, to which the kettle-drums and cymbals of the horsemen lent additional animation.

But the shouts which greeted this part of the procession became subdued; for now came a single horseman, riding alone, with a page on each side supporting his footcloth, which was composed entirely of cloth-of-gold. He was a man of a singularly noble presence and commanding stature; his deep dark eyes were full of fire and expression, yet his face was calm and placid, and his gaze was fixed on the flowing mane of his

beautiful roan horse; and though every head bowed at his approach, he seemed abstracted and oblivious of all; his cope and stockings were scarlet, and a very broad hat of the same sanguine hue cast a pleasant shadow over his sombre features.

"Rise, my bairns," said the Countess of Ashkirk; "it is his eminence the cardinal!"

And chancing to raise his head at that moment, he waved a benediction towards the balcony. He was David Beaton, cardinal of St. Stephen, the lord high chancellor of Scotland, legate of Paul III., and the terror of those who, in their secret hearts, had begun to nourish the doctrines of the reformed church. A young cavalier, in a half suit of magnificently gilded armour, attended him, and spent his time between caressing a falcon which sat upon his dexter wrist, and bowing to the ladies on either side of the street. He was Sir Norman Leslie of Rothess, who, a few years after, slew the cardinal in his archiepiscopal palace. Immediately behind him came a crowd of ecclesiastics, and the eight bishops—Stewart of Aberdeen, Hepburn of Brechin, Chisholm, the worthless holder of the see of Dunblane, Dunkeld, Moray, Ross, Orkeny, and Ferquhard of the Isles, all riding on led horses, with their mitres, crosiers, and magnificent vestments, glittering in the sunlight.

Then came the black abbot of Cambus Kenneth (the lord president of the New College of Justice), attended by his fourteen senators, the *ten* sworn advocates, the clerks to the signet, notaries and macers of court, all of whom were greeted with lowering brows and murmurs of ill-repressed hatred and dislike; for the introduction of the courts of session and justiciary had been a very unpalatable measure to the factious and turbulent Scots.

Surrounded by the chief ladies of the kingdom, and by the damsels of honour all richly attired in hoods of velvet tied with strings of pearl, with kirtles of brocade and cloth of gold, Magdalene of France approached on a palfrey white as the new fallen snow, with six young knights (each the son of an earl) supporting on their lances a silken canopy above her head. The splendour of her dress, which was shining with costly jewels, enhanced the greatness of her beauty, which outshone the charms of all around her, even the fair girls to whom the reader has been so lately introduced. Sprung from a royal line long famous for the charms of its princesses, Magdalene was only in her sixteenth year; but over her girlish loveliness the pallor of consumption was then spreading a veil more tender and enchanting. The novelty and excitement of the scene around lent additional animation to her lively French features, and heightened the brilliancy of her complexion, which was exquisitely fair; her eyes were light blue, and her braided hair was of the most beautiful blonde. She was rather small in stature, but beautifully formed; and the sweetness of her happy smile, and the grace with which she bowed and kissed both her hands alternately to the subjects of her husband, filled them with a storm of enthusiasm; and the respectful silence which had greeted her at first, expanded into a burst of rapture and congratulation. The ambassadors of England, Spain, France, and Savoy, wearing the collars of various knightly orders, rode near her.

With the sword, sceptre, and crown, borne, each by an earl, before him, James appeared, attended by the leading nobles of the realm. A cuirass of steel, polished like a mirror and inlaid with gold, showed to advantage his bold breast and taper waist. His doublet

and trunk breeches were of white satin slashed with yellow and buttoned with diamonds, and his short mantle of azure velvet was tied over his breast with golden tassels. The collars of the Thistle, the Garter, the Golden Fleece, and the escallops of St. Michael, were hanging on his breast, and flashed in one broad blaze to the noon-day sun. His dark eyes were full of animation, and the ringlets of his rich brown hair fluttered in the breeze as he waved his plumed cap to the people who loved him well, for he was better pleased to be thought the king of the *poor* than king of the peers of Scotland. He was surrounded by all the great officers of state and household; Robert, abbot of Holyrood, bearing his high treasurer's mace with its beryl ball, rode beside Colville of Culross, the great chamberlain of Scotland. Then came the lord high constable and the great marischal, the former with a naked sword, and the latter with an axe, borne before him; Colville of Ochiltree, the comptroller; the dean of Glasgow, the secretary of state; Argyle, the lord justice-general, and Colinton, the lord clerk registrar; Lord Evandale, director of the chancery, the preceptor of the Knights of St. John, the high admiral, the royal standard-bearer, the grand carver, the great cup-bearer, the masters of the horse, the hounds, and the falcons, the marshal of the household, and though last, not least, Jock Macilree, the king's jester, who has been immortalised by the Knight of the Mount; and though ignobly bestriding a sleek donkey, his parti-colored garb, his long-eared cap, jangling bells, hanging bladder, and resounding laugh, attracted more attention than the mailed chivalry and sumptuously-attired noblesse who encircled the king.

James, who bowed affably to the people on every

side, was scrupulous in recognising all ladies, especially if handsome, and consequently the bright group clustered round the Countess of Ashkirk could not escape his observation. Waving his bonnet, he was about to bow to his horse's mane, when his eye caught the quarterings of Douglas, and an ominous flash of undisguised anger immediately crimsoned his fine features; he was turning away, when a rose was thrown upon his breast, and a pleasant voice cried,

"Heaven save your grace, and bless our fair lady the queen!"

It was Jane Seton's voice, and the richness of its tone with the sweetness of her smile subdued James at once; and placing the rose in the diamond George that hung from the splendid collar of the garter, this gallant young king bowed low, and kissed his hand.

"Hark you, Vipont," said he, to a handsome young man about his own age, who rode by his side; "what dame and damoiselles are these? You vailed your bonnet with more than usual reverence to them."

The cavalier hesitated.

"Faith," continued James, "there was a most undeniable scowl in the dark eyes of the elder lady in that outrageous English coif. Who is she, and why, if the devil's name, does she wear *that*?"

"I trust your majesty is mistaken," replied the young man, hurriedly, and with confusion; "she is the countess dowager of Ashkirk, with her daughter the Lady Jane."

"Ashkirk!" reiterated James, knitting his brows; "is she not a daughter of old Greysteel, and hath more than a spark of old Bell-the-cat in her spirit? By St. Anne, this accounts for her English coif, when, out of compliment to our royal consort, the French fashions are all in vogue!"

"Please your majesty," urged Vipont.——

"I remember the dame of old, in the days of the Douglasses tyranny, when they kept me a close captive in the old tower of Falkland. God's malison on the whole tribe; I would it had but one neck, and that it lay under my heel!"

"Amen, say I;" "and I," "and I," added several courtiers, who enjoyed gifts from the forfeited estates of the banished barons.

The young man sighed and bit his lips as he checked his horse a little, and permitted Sir David Lindesay of the Mount, another favourite, to assume his place by the side of the king.

Tall, and finely formed, with an erect bearing and athletic figure, Sir Roland Vipont was the very model of a graceful cavalier. His features, though not strictly handsome, were pleasing, manly, and expressive of health, good humour, and the utmost frankness. His heavy moustaches were pointed sharply upwards, and his hair was shorn close (*à la* Philip II.), to permit his wearing a helmet with ease, for, as master of the royal ordnance, a week seldom passed in those turbulent times without his being engaged on the king's service. A smart bonnet of blue velvet, adorned by a single feather, by its elegant slouch gave a grace to the contour of his head; while a short mantle of the same material, lined with white satin, and furred, as usual, with miniver, waved from his left shoulder. His trunk breeches were also of white satin, and slashed with red; his doublet was cloth of gold, and, blazing in the sunlight, rivalled his magnificent baldrick, which, like his bugle-horn, sword, and dagger, was studded with precious stones. No knight present, not even the king

himself, surpassed the master of the ordnance in the splendour of attire, the caparisons of his horse, or the grace with which he managed it; and yet poor Sir Roland, though the last representative of the Viponts of Fifeshire (the Scoto-Norman barons of Aberdour), possessed not one acre of land, and, soldier-like, carried all his riches about him.

His whole features beamed with joy and ardour, as he raised his eyes to the Ashkirk balcony; his sun-burned cheek grew crimson, and his heart bounded with delight. Jane trembled as she smiled, and grew pale (for, as I have said elsewhere, she grew pale when other girls would have blushed). Many months had elapsed since they had looked on each other's beaming faces, and a volume of happiness and recognition was exchanged in their mutual glances.

"Brave Vipont!" exclaimed the old countess, with something of a mother's ardour, as she looked after him, "of a verity, there are few more noble among our Scottish knights. How unfortunate that he is such a minion to the will of a pampered king."

"Minion, good mother!" said Jane, faintly.

"I said minion, child; and I now say slave! Didst thou not see how covertly he bowed to us, and then only when the king looked another way? A proper squire, by our Lady! and didst thou not mark how James frowned when first he saw us, nor bowed?"—

"Until I smiled on him," said Jane, playfully.

"Naughty little varlet, methought 'twas when I smiled," said Alison Home, gaily, as she kissed her beautiful friend.

"Poor Vipont!" continued the countess, "he dreads the loss of thy love, Jane, on one hand, and of the

king's favour on the other. But for this paltry manœuvring, child, thou hadst been the lady of his heart a year ago."

"Mother, I have been the lady of his heart these *three* years; but poor Roland hath no more to give me than a heart in return. His estate——"

"Consists of old Mons Meg and her marrows," said Marion Logan.

"A lucrative estate he hath found them sometimes," said the countess, coldly, "when he bent their cannon-balls against the castles of the Douglasses. But for this paltry fear, I repeat, thou hadst been his wedded wife a year ago, and he had been now a true man to the Earls of Ashkirk and Angus, instead of being the silken slave of James Stuart, whose poor ambition is to grind beneath his heel that Red Heart which my husband hath often borne, amid crashing spears, in the van of Scotland's battles—and ever bore victoriously!" And as she spoke, the countess struck her clenched hand upon the banner which was spread over the balcony before her.

"Thou sayest well, dearest madam!" said little Sybil Douglas, whose dark eyes sparkled as she imbibed some of the countess's fiery spirit; "and again that Red Heart shall be a terror to the Lowlands, and a scourge for past injuries."

At that moment Lady Jane Seton raised her eyes to a window opposite, and encountered the fixed gaze of a sickly and ghastly face; the features were rigid, the lips firmly compressed, the dark eyes were fiery and red. There was a basilisk or rattlesnake expression in them that riveted her attention. They were those of Sir Adam Otterburn of Redhall, who had been attentively

observing the greeting which passed between her and Vipont—a greeting that wrung his heart with agony and jealousy ; but he bowed with studied politeness, and hurriedly withdrew.

Jane felt relieved by his absence, and again drew breath more freely ; but her colour came and went, and her heart for a moment became filled (she knew not why) with vague apprehensions. She knew all Sir Adam's glance conveyed, and trembled for her lover ; for the King's Advocate of the New Court was then vested with such powers and terrors as a romancer would alone endow a grand inquisitor.

The pageant passed on to Holyrood accompanied by loud and incessant bursts of acclamation ; by songs and carols of welcome and of triumph ; for the people, already predisposed to loyalty and jollity, were enraptured by the return of the king, by the gallantry of his bearing, and the beauty of his young French bride. Thus the wells continued to pour forth wine and ale alternately, the castle to fire its ordnance, and the people to shout until St. Marie (a great bell with a very sweet tone, which then hung in the rood tower of St. Giles) rung the citizens to vespers and to rest.

CHAPTER III.

THE MASTER OF THE ORDNANCE.

“The bride into her bower is sent,
The ribald rhyme and jesting spent;
The lover’s whispered words and few,
Have bade the bashful maid adieu;
The dancing floor is silent quite,
No foot bounds there—Good night! good night!”

JOANNA BAILLIE.

EVENING was closing, when a brilliantly attired cavalier caracoled his horse from the palace porch, past the high Flemish gables of an ancient edifice, which was then the Mint of Scotland, past the strong round archway known as the Water Gate, because it led to the great horse-pond of the palace, and throwing a handful of groats (twenty to king James’s golden penny) among the poor dyvours who clustered round the girth cross of the Holy Sanctuary, rode up the Canongate. It was Sir Roland Vipont, the master of the king’s ordnance.

Compared to the bustle it had exhibited at noon, the street, though many still thronged it, seemed lifeless and empty. The windows were closed, the balconies deserted, the banners, pennons, and tapestry hung pendant and motionless, and the gay garlands were withering on the stone cross of St. John of Jerusalem. Casting

a hasty glance around him to discover whether he was observed (for the political, feudal, and court intrigues of the time made it necessary that his visit to the family of Ashkirk should be as little noted as possible), he dismounted.

A low-browed pend, or archway, opening from the street, and surmounted by a massive coat of arms within a deep square panel, gave admittance to the paved court of the mansion. He led his horse through, and was buckling the bridle to one of the numerous rings with which, for the convenience of mounted visitors, the walls of the court were furnished, when a man, who for some time before had been standing in the shadow of the archway, roughly jostled him.

"How now, sirrah?" exclaimed Vipont, feeling for his poniard, "what mean you by this?"

"Pardon me—my foot tripped," replied the other, in a husky voice.

"Who are you," asked Vipont, suspiciously, "and what make you here, sir?"

"In the first place I am no friend of yours, in the second my purpose matters nothing to any man—so, keep your way, in Heaven's name, and let me keep mine, or it may fare the worse with you."

"This is language rarely addressed to me."

"Thou!" said the other, scornfully, "and who art *thou*?"

"Devil choke thee, rascal!" exclaimed the soldier, angrily; "I am master of the king's ordnance."

"To be master of your own temper would be better; but, like your brass culverins, it seems apt to go off upon occasions."

"Hark you, sir; if you deem this witty, you are

labouring under a delusion ; and, had I not matters of more importance in hand, by the holy mass ! I would break every bone in your body."

The other made no immediate reply, but his eyes gleamed like two red coals beneath the black bonnet, which he wore drawn over his brows ; but he was so well muffled up by the cape of his large mantle, that Sir Roland strove in vain to discover some clue as to whom he might be, that was prowling by night near the mansion of the Setons ; and there was something so startling and cat-like in the aspect of his eyes, that the soldier recoiled a pace.

" Sir Roland," continued the stranger, sarcastically, " you had acted a wiser part in staying by James's side at Holyrood to-night, than in forfeiting his fickle favour by visiting those who are his avowed enemies."

" Thou liest, sirrah !" said Vipont, striking him on the shoulder with his clenched hand. " The Setons of Ashkirk are loyal as any in the land, and I will meet hand to hand, and body for body, any false traitor that gainsays me. But keep your own way, in the devil's name, and trouble me no more—so, a good even, sir."

" I bid thee joy of thy wooing, fair sir," replied the other, scornfully, as the master of the ordnance entered, and closed the gate behind him. It was Redhall who spoke, and a sigh of rage and bitterness escaped him as Vipont approached the turnpike tower of the mansion. " Painted wasp !" he exclaimed, as he walked hurriedly away, " by Him who died upon the rood, that blow shall cost thee dear !"

Within an apartment which was completely hung with the richest arras, though the floor was bare, the Countess of Ashkirk, her daughter, and the ladies,

were seated at various occupations. The old lady was slowly and laboriously endeavouring to decipher, word by word, one of those curious old tomes which, at times, issued from the shop of Chepman and Millar, two ancient bibliopoles, who established, in the Cowgate, the first printing-press in Scotland, in the time of James IV., who granted them the privilege of "imprenting all bukes" within the realm.

Alison Hume and the black page were playing at chess, the fair young girl looking almost like a divinity when contrasted to the frightful African boy; while Jane Seton and her dark-eyed kinswoman, Sybil Douglas, influenced by that spirit of industry which then pervaded all ranks, were plying their busy hands in embroidering a velvet cover for a large vellum missal, which they were working in flowers of gold and silk, and which was to be a donation from Jane to her friend Josina Henrison, the lady superior of St. Catherine's Convent, near the Burghloch.

The light of the setting sun streamed through the windows, and fell upon their dark hair, as it mingled together, and edged their white necks and nimble fingers with dazzling whiteness. A bell tolled at a distance; they paused, and looked up.

"Eight o'clock," said the countess; "the bell is ringing for the *compline*, at St. Marie of Placentia."

"And *he* tarries yet," said Jane, in a low voice to Sybil.

"Do not speak reproachfully, cousin," replied Sybil, gently; "he is not always master of his own actions, and thou knowest well——"

The black page touched her arm, laid a finger on his great nether lip, and pointed towards the street.

"Dear Sabrina," said Jane; "what dost thou hear?"

"Horse!" replied the page, briefly.

"Sabrino, thou hast the very ears of a bratch hound," said the countess. "Now spurs are jingling under the pend—'tis he!" continued the old lady, whose cheek flushed, and eyes filled with joyous expectation. A manly step, and the clear ringing of silver spurs, were heard ascending the stone staircase of the mansion; a hand covered with a steel gauntlet drew back the heavy arras, and the lights flashed on the glittering doublet and jewelled baldrick of Sir Roland Vipont, as he sprang blithely in.

"Heaven keep you, Lady Ashkirk, and you, my dear Jane, and all fair ladies!" said he, bowing, and kissing all their hands. "Hail to thee, merry Alison, and thou, my sad little Sybil! why, I have not been long absent, and yet thou seemest quite a woman now!"

"Welcome home—a thousand welcomes to thee, Roland, and a thousand more!" said the countess, forgetting her starched dignity in her native kindness of heart, and kissing him on the forehead—for though he was tall, they were nearly of a height—while Jane grew pale with excitement, and then blushed with pleasure to see her suitor looking so handsome in his rich attire—browned by nine months exposure to a continental sun, and appearing, if possible, more graceful and athletic than ever. "Welcome, Roland," continued the countess, passing her hand fondly over his broad, clear, open forehead, his arched eyebrows, and his thick glossy hair; "we have all heard how thou hast been proving thy prowess on the crests of king Francis and his knights, and letting the gay tilters of Paris and Versailles feel the weight of a tough Lowland spear in a true Scottish hand."

"True, madam," replied the young man, laughing, and showing a set of teeth which any of the fair belles present might have envied; "it would have gladdened your haughty Douglas spirit, Lady Ashkirk, to have seen king Francis with twenty Scottish knights keeping the old wooden bridge of St. Michael at Paris for three days against our own king James, with the best chivalry of Burgundy, Brabant, and Alsace, and with all comers who chose to try their hardiment against us. By my faith, sweet Jane, the knot of ribbands your dear hands wove in my helmet, were the mark of many a sword and many a spear during these three brawling days; but they seemed to possess a charm, for thrust of lance and blow of blade were levelled at them in vain. But what think ye of the new queen we have brought you home? Is not the fair Magdalene a mirror of beauty? and may not France and Scotland too be proud of her? Jane, what sayest thou?"

"Hum!" said Jane, a little piqued at her lover's excessive admiration for the queen; "methinks she is very passable."

"Passable! Ah, surely *you* can afford to praise her more than that. I think she is like *la belle Isonde*, in Sir Thomas Malory's 'Romance of King Arthur,'" replied Vipont, drawing near Jane, while, as if instinctively, the other persons present withdrew to the extreme end of the apartment, and conversed with the countess. "Now tell me, thou merry wag, thy opinion of her."

"I do not think her by one half so charming as my own little self," replied Jane, archly; "and thou, who oughtest to have only eyes for me, should see in her an exceedingly plain woman. When thou seemest so much pleased with her, what surety have I that I was not

forgotten by her admirer, amid all the gaieties, the fêtes, and splendour of king Francis' court?"

"Forgotten, Jane!" responded the young man, tenderly, while his dark eyes filled with a soft expression. "Those who see and love thee will never forget! Have not our hearts been entwined for years, and am I not thy gallant brother's oldest and earliest friend? Have we not grown together from infancy to childhood, from childhood to maturity? and now, in the full flush of our love and joy, you hint that I might forget you!"

"I cry you mercy! what an exordium; I spoke but in pure raillery and jest, dear Roland."

"But why jest thus? Ah no, my gentle Jane, never for an instant were your fair face and sunny smiles absent from my mind, and their memory spurred me on to encounter a thousand difficulties, and enabled me to surmount a thousand dire temptations that beset the path of others; and thus I am come back to you more loving, if possible, more true, and more impassioned than ever!"

"Oh, Roland, I can believe it well!" sighed the girl, as her lover, borne away by the depth of his passion (though speaking in a low voice), pressed both her hands to his heart, regardless that the eyes of others saw them.

"Behold what I have brought you from this far-famed city of Paris," said he, as he clasped around her delicate throat a circlet of magnificent diamonds.

"Ah! my poor Vipont," exclaimed Jane; "you must have ruined yourself to bring me this. What a sum it must have cost!"

"Eleonora of Austria, the queen of France and sister of the great Charles V., took it from her own fair neck and bestowed it on me as a gift for my Scottish bride;

and joyously I thought of you, Jane, when I knelt to receive it from her hands. It was at a passage of arms held near the Porte Papale, just without the walls of Paris, and on the festival of St. Denis, when with a single lance I kept the barrier for an hour, successively prostrating in the dust six Italian knights who had come to France in the train of the Milanese ambassador. By my faith, sweet flower, I covered myself with glory and popularity that day; for it so happened, that Sforza, duke of Milan, is the sworn foe of Francis I., and the hearts of the people were all with the victorious Scottish knight."

"And did king James see thee, Sir Roland?" asked the young ladies, who crowded round the delighted girl to observe her splendid gift.

"He sat by the side of queen Eleanora, and when the sixth cavalier was unhorsed, sprang up from his seat, and throwing his blue bonnet into the air, exclaimed, 'Now, God be with thee, my valiant Vipont, thou hast well sustained our Scottish name to-day, and I will never forget it.' But his rewards are yet to come, fair ladies," added Vipont, as he sighed secretly and glanced at Jane Seton.

"Roland," said the countess, who was beginning to reflect that she had been too long silent; "believe me, those who put their trust in princes are ever deceived. I heard our good king James IV. say so when I was but a girl."

"He referred then to his brother-in-law of England, whom the laws of neither God nor man could bind; but judge not so of James V., lady. As yet I am but the captain of his ordnance, with the pittance doled out to me monthly by the clerk of his exchequer. Many a fair promise he hath made me of some small portion

of those solid gifts—the towers and acres of wold and woodland, which he lavishes on Hamilton the Inquisitor, on Abbot Robert the Treasurer, his eminence the cardinal, and others, but, to our sad experience, Jane, we find them as yet unperformed.”

“Better it is that they are so,” said the countess, “for then, as Beaton and the abbot do, ye should brook the patrimonies of the proscribed and banished knights and nobles of my father’s name.”

“True, lady countess; but James is so winning and courteous in manner, so generous and heroic in disposition, that no true Scottish man can behold him without feeling a glow of admiration and loyalty, and at times methinks I could lay down my life for him (ah! I see thou holdest up thy finger), were it not, Jane, dedicated to thee. I could cheerfully battle to the death against all that are his enemies.”

“Even the Douglasses and the Setons of Ashkirk,” said the countess, coldly. “Oh thou hast become an apt bravo of this commons’ king, I fear me.”

“Noble lady,” replied Roland, bitterly, “there, as I take God to witness, thou taskest me sorely. I could not bend a weapon against the house of Douglas, for this dear being,” and he took Jane’s hand in his, “is the inheritor of their blood; and yet to fail the king even in that particular would be to prove me a mansworn knight and false traitor!”

“Thou art ever by his side, Roland,” said Jane, “and can say how he is affected towards us—the Setons of Ashkirk.”

“Implacable as ever! Thou rememberest, mine own ladyekin, of the solemn vow he swore, when, by the troopers of Angus, Sir David Falconer was slain by his side, under the ramparts of Tantallon—that solemn vow

made above a crucifix and dagger, *never while he lived to forgive a Douglas, or one of the Douglas' blood*. There is no hope; for that oath I know the king will keep, even though his holiness Paul III. should offer to absolve him from it."

"And let him keep it!" said the countess, with bitterness and scorn; "it matters little. There are spears by the Liddle and archers in Douglassdale who may one day absolve him, as his grandsire was absolved on the field of Sauchieburn. Let us remember the deeds of that day, and the old prophecy that a lion should be killed by its whelps. The Master of Angus, the knights of Glenbernie, Drumlanrig, Lochleven, and Kinross," continued the countess, reckoning them on her fingers, "with two hundred gentlemen of the surname of Douglas, all died at Flodden, beneath the banner of King James IV., and thus it is his son rewards us!"

"Oh, lady countess, hush; and pardon me, but there seems something hateful in your hostility to James V."

"By the Holy Rood and the blessed St. Bryde to boot! I have no patience with thee, friend Roland. I warrant thee in secret a sworn foe to Angus."

"On my honour, no!"

"And my mind misgives me sorely anent ye and my daughter, having both had the misfortune to be born on a Friday."

"I pray you hear me," said Roland, with a secret smile. "So happy was James on beholding the Scottish shore, that, in a burst of gratitude to heaven, and love for his people, he was not disinclined to relax those severe statutes under which the exiled peers and barons of the house of Douglas writhe and languish——"

"Say writhe, Sir Roland, for I warrant me they will

quite pacified, while Jane's bright face became radiant with pleasure.

The countess and her niece, Sybil, with Alison Home and Marion Logan, knowing that they could now be spared, retired to prepare for that early supper of which our late dinners have now usurped the place, and the lovers were left alone, seated together hand in hand, for the first time during nine long months.

They were all eye and ear for each other, as they conversed in voices that were soft and low, and love carried them back to those days of gaiety and simplicity before the cold hand of etiquette had interposed between them. Little Sybil closed the arras as she went out, and we have no wish, by raising it, to break the spell that love and pleasure threw around them.

CHAPTER IV.

REDHALL.

"The will is free; why must it then be curbed?
I would be happy, gain what I desire,
Or feel each pulse throb pleasure in the chase—
Yet this new teacher tells such pleasure is
A fruit I must untasted shun."

Nimrod. Act. III.

THE apartment, which was half darkened, was partly tapestried and partly wainscoted. A stone fire-place, on grotesque columns covered with carved roses, destitute of grate (for grates were not then in fashion) and of fire, for the season was summer, by its emptiness lent a somewhat dreary aspect to the chamber. The floor was without carpet, for carpets were almost unknown in Scotland till 1560 (three and twenty years after); the furniture was of massive oak. The well grated windows, which looked to the Friar Wynd, were concealed by thick curtains, and gaudily-flowered tapestries framed in richly carved oak covered most part of the walls. A brilliant suit of armour, hanging upon a nail or steel hook, and a few shelves of gigantic folios bound in vellum, edged with red, and clasped with brass, were the leading features in this chamber. A sand-glass stood upon the table, for one was usually carried by fellows of colleges and other learned men about this

period in lieu of a watch, as we may read in Aubrey's Memoirs.

A folio lay on the black oak table, and on its closely-written leaves the light fell from a great iron lamp of grotesque form, covered by a circular shade. With his head reclined on one hand, and the other thrust into the breast of his black velvet doublet, the King's Advocate sat dreamily and moodily immersed in deep thought. His grave and classic face was of a clear olive complexion. His nose was perfectly straight, his eyes large, black, and sparkling, and his knit eyebrows now formed one complete arch above them. His smooth and lofty brow was expressive of deep thought, of watching and study, and even of tranquillity, though there were times when it could assume a terrible expression, and his keen dark orbs would fill with fire, and every hair of his short mustaches bristled with passion. His mouth was decidedly his worst feature; but his short beard concealed those thin lips which Lavater considered the infallible sign of a mind pregnant with evil. His aspect was lofty and severe, and his eye was so penetrating that few could sustain the fire and inquiry of its glance.

The pages of the *Forest Laws*, written by king William the Lion, lay before him, but his eyes were fixed on his jewelled poniard that lay on the table close by, showing how his mind wandered from the subject he had sat down to study to the irate promptings of jealousy and revenge.

For Jane Seton, Sir Adam Otterburn and Roland Vipont had long been rivals; at least so the former had viewed the latter, who had neither dreaded him nor feared his attentions, for such was his confidence in the love and truth of Jane; yet he had nothing to rely on but his sword and the somewhat precarious favour of

James V., while Redhall was the proprietor of a strong baronial fortalice, a noble domain situated a few miles south of the city, and as lord advocate of Scotland was a powerful officer of state, then armed with more powers and terrors than any ten inquisitors of the Holy Office. His position was most honourable, and in virtue of it he was always addressed "My Lord." His knowledge of law was little, but his privileges were great; he was permitted to sit covered within the bar of the Court of Session like a peer of the realm, and he had the power of issuing warrants for searching, apprehending, imprisoning and putting to the torture any person in Scotland—his warrants being valid as those of the king. Such was Roland's formidable competitor for the hand of Jane Seton, to whom the young cavalier would have been wedded fully two years before the time in which this history opens, but for the fear of forfeiting king James's favour, and the implacable hostility of that prince to the house of Douglas, which formed an insuperable barrier to any of the court favourites who might be disposed (which few of them were) to form alliances with any noble family of that obnoxious surname.

Aware of this, Otterburn, whose landed possessions rendered him happily independent of James's frowns or favour, had redoubled his assiduity and attentions, never once permitting the hope to die, that Jane might ultimately regard him with favour. During the nine months absence of the master of the ordnance in France with king James, the addresses of Otterburn had been as unmistakeable as they were obnoxious to the young lady; who, seeing in him only the great public prosecutor of her own and mother's family, viewed him with horror and hostility, though she dismissed him with a cold but cautious politeness, that,

strange to say, while it eclipsed his hopes, in no way extinguished his ardour.

From that time forward he could visit her no more, but his inborn obstinacy of spirit and indomitable vanity would not admit of his totally resigning her—especially during the absence of Vipont, against whose safe return there were many chances, during the escapades and broils, the midnight rambles and mad-cap adventures, in which he and the king were constantly involved. For a time, Otterburn had again given way to the illusions of hope and the impulses of his heart; but now the safe and sudden return of his brilliant rival had swept them all away, together with a thousand bright day-dreams, as a breeze does the gossamer webs; and the strong mind of the statesman and judge became a prey to anxious jealousy and furious hatred.

“As a rainbow fades from the sky so has this bright vision passed from before me!” he exclaimed, as he struck his hands together, and looked upward with something of despair. In his better moments he felt only grief, when his more generous impulses would prompt him to resign Jane Seton in peace to her more favoured lover.

“Were she mine,” he mused, with a face that became alternately sad and mournful, or dark and saturnine, “her happiness would be my only object; then why should I seek to mar it because she is *not*? By what glamour can this mere girl, who never once thought of me otherwise than as the persecutor of the Douglasses, fascinate me thus, swaying my heart, my soul, my every purpose—being the object of every effort—the inspirer of every thought? How cometh it that her coldness, her disdain, her hate (nay, she is too

gentle for *that*), all serve but to increase my love? Oh! 'tis sorcery! 'tis sorcery! Oh! in how many a long and weary night I have pressed a pillow sleeplessly, and courted slumber, but in vain? How often have I tried to rend her image from my heart, to supplant it by another, and in vain. I have recoiled from that other with disgust, as the more winning image of Jane came before me; and yet she loves me not. How often have I fruitlessly striven to crush this mad and besotting passion, and to nourish only hatred, indifference, or revenge. God help me! I am very miserable. And shall I resign her to the arms of this upstart favourite, this cut-throat cannoneer, and gilded hireling of king James—resign her without a struggle—I, who am so immeasurably his superior in fortune, mind, and purpose?—Never! How strong this passion of love is! How noble, and for how glorious a purpose has God implanted it in our hearts; but oh, may few endure like me to love an object that loves another, and yieldeth no return. Let dotard monks and deceived misanthropes, let stoics and philosophers say what they will, there is more magic and power in the single smile of a woman than in all the impulses of the human heart put together. Ambition dazzles, hatred sways, and revenge impels us—they are powerful incentives, and their triumph is delicious—but love is greater than all. Generosity urges me to leave her to the fool she loves—to avoid her path, her presence, and her spells for ever; but passion, obstinacy, and infatuation, lead me on, and overwhelming every gentler sentiment, impel me to the pursuit. Shall I then be baffled and foiled by this poor caterpillar, whose wings have expanded in the brief sunshine of royal favour—this silken slave—this Roland Vipont, who, not six years since, wore an

iron hongreline and brass plate, as a mere French cannoneer, under Vaudmont and the Marshal Lautreque—never! And, by the holy arm of St. Giles! this night shall end our rivalry for ever!”

Thus said, or rather thought, Redhall; and suddenly pausing, he snatched up a long metal whistle, that lay always at hand, and blew a shrill call.

Almost immediately afterwards the arras was lifted, a man entered, and making a respectful obeisance, stood at a little distance.

gentle for *that*), all serve but to increase my love? Oh! 'tis sorcery! 'tis sorcery! Oh! in how many a long and weary night I have pressed a pillow sleeplessly, and courted slumber, but in vain? How often have I tried to rend her image from my heart, to supplant it by another, and in vain. I have recoiled from that other with disgust, as the more winning image of Jane came before me; and yet she loves me not. How often have I fruitlessly striven to crush this mad and besotting passion, and to nourish only hatred, indifference, or revenge. God help me! I am very miserable. And shall I resign her to the arms of this upstart favourite, this cut-throat cannoneer, and gilded hireling of king James—resign her without a struggle—I, who am so immeasurably his superior in fortune, mind, and purpose?—Never! How strong this passion of love is! How noble, and for how glorious a purpose has God implanted it in our hearts; but oh, may few endure like me to love an object that loves another, and yieldeth no return. Let dotard monks and deceived misanthropes, let stoics and philosophers say what they will, there is more magic and power in the single smile of a woman than in all the impulses of the human heart put together. Ambition dazzles, hatred sways, and revenge impels us—they are powerful incentives, and their triumph is delicious—but love is greater than all. Generosity urges me to leave her to the fool she loves—to avoid her path, her presence, and her spells for ever; but passion, obstinacy, and infatuation, lead me on, and overwhelming every gentler sentiment, impel me to the pursuit. Shall I then be baffled and foiled by this poor caterpillar, whose wings have expanded in the brief sunshine of royal favour—this silken slave—this Roland Vipont, who, not six years since, wore an

which had a very repulsive squareness of aspect, two enormous ears, and a great mastiff mouth.

This worthy was Nichol Birrel, the brodder or witch pricker of the newly established high court of justiciary, one of the most unscrupulous and atrocious ruffians that ever occupied this important, and, in after years, lucrative situation.

Born and bred a vassal on the estate of the lord advocate, to whom he was intensely devoted, he had obtained the place of prover or witchfinder, as it peculiarly suited his ruffianly and sanguinary disposition. Several other minor officials of the new court were like him, the immediate and devoted dependents of Redhall, for whom they acted as bravoes on a hundred occasions. Nichol, though cruel, false, bitter, and treacherous to all the rest of mankind, was true, faithful, and sincerely a friend to his lord and benefactor; for he seemed to be possessed by the same instinct which attaches a ferocious hound to the hand that feeds him.

"Od save us, my lord, ye look ill! Is there aught the matter wi' ye?" he asked, gruffly.

"Nichol, is there none in attendance on me but thee?" asked the advocate, without regarding his inquiry; "where are all the servitors?"

"At the palace, seeing the merry masquers."

"Mass! where I should have been but for this accursed sickness, which, to-night, hath fallen so heavily upon me. It matters not; I am invited by the lord chamberlain to the fête of to-morrow.

"Ye look worse to-night, Redhall, than I have seen ye since Lententime."

"I am sick at heart, Nichol."

"I have been so at the stomach many a time and oft, when I mixed my ale with usquebaugh, but as for the heart——"

"Psha !" exclaimed the advocate, starting abruptly, "either my brain is under the influence of insanity, or there is a spell of sorcery upon me."

"Dost suspect any ill-woman of being the cause thereof, Sir Adam ?" asked the brodder, whose eyes began to twinkle in anticipation of a pricking fee, while his square mouth expanded into a grin.

"No, no ; I spoke but in metaphor, and suspect none." He paused. "Thou sawest the procession to-day?"

Nichol nodded his vast head affirmatively.

"Didst mark any man there whom ye knew to be my enemy?"

"I marked his eminence the cardinal, who confined a damosel of yours, among his other ladies, in the auld tower of Creich."

"Tush !"

"I observed the lord abbot of the Holy Cross, who won his plea against thee anent the duty on every cart entering the barriers of the town."

"Thou triflest ! didst mark no one else?"

"Well, then, I marked the master of the king's ordnance, shining in cloth of gold and crammasie."

"Good !—anything more?"

"I saw him smile as he curvetted, in his bravery, past the ladies of Ashkirk," replied Nichol, with a cunning leer, while the advocate gnashed his teeth ; "and sweetly the Lady Jane smiled on him again. It was a braw sight and a brave ; and a gude ransom the master's doublet and foot-cloth would have been to any bold fellow that met him in the gloaming by Leith Loan or the Burghmuir ; for they were pure cloth of gold, and champit with pearls, so that I marvel not the Lady Seton smiled so brightly ; for, if love maketh a woman's eye bright, gold will make it brighter."

"Thou art a mercenary slave!" said the advocate, bitterly; "and never felt the passion of which thou talkest so glibly. Nichol, have I not been to thee ever a friend rather than a lord and master—kind, indulgent, and liberal——"

"When service was to be performed," said Nichol, parenthetically, closing one of his yellow eyes with another hideous leer.

"At all times, Nichol," continued the king's advocate, striking his heel sharply on the ground. "Thou knowest that the master of the ordnance and I have long been at deadly feud about—but it recks not thee about what."

"Say Jane Seton of Ashkirk, my lord, and you will shoot near the mark."

Redhall's eyes flashed, and he made a fierce gesture of impatience, for he disliked to hear her name in the mouth of this ruffian, whom he despised while he fed and fostered him.

"It is enough, Nichol Birrel—thou understandest me—the master of the ordnance bars my way; this must not be, and shall not be."

There was a pause.

"Well, Sir Adam?" growled the pricker.

"Thou hast thy poniard," said the knight, hoarsely.

"Ay," replied the ruffian, as a broad grin expanded his mastiff mouth, and his great teeth appeared like a row of fangs through his matted beard; "ay, the same gude knife with which I slew Maclellan, the Knight of Bombie, at the north door of St. Giles' kirk. By one backhanded stroke I dashed it into his heart, and he fell with his rosary in his uplifted hand, the name of God on his lips, and the half-signed cross on his brow, yet they saved him not."

There was a pause, for Birrel, who had commenced in a tone of ruffian irony, ended in a dismal quaver, and grew pale.

"Wretch and fool!" cried the lord advocate, "why remind me of that?"

He gave his dependent a terrible glance.

"I crave pardon, Sir Adam; but when I bethink me that this Sir Thomas of Bombie had the lairds of Achlane, Glenshannoch, and Bourg, with nine other knights of his surname to avenge him, I surely ran some risk."

"The Lords of Drumlanrig and Lochinvar were said, by common rumour, to have slain him, and so let it be; he was a foe of the house of Otterburn," hissed the advocate through his teeth, "and of the faction to which that house adhered; a foe to me in particular, and as such must Vipont, the accursed Vipont, die."

Nichol uttered a sound between a growl and a laugh.

"Are Dobbie the doomster, and Sanders the torturer below? I warrant they will be snoring, like gorged hounds, by the kitchen ingle."

"No, they are birling their cans in the buttery."

"Then see to this affair; but dost think we can rely on them?"

"Like myself, Sir Adam, they and their forbears have been leal men and true to the house of Redhall, and wherefore would they fail it now? We are the servants of the law, and what matters it whether we string this soldier of the king in a tow at the cross, or pink him in the dark? 'tis death, any way;" and here the fellow uttered a ferocious laugh again.

"For your own sakes and mine be secret, sincere, and sure."

The pricker touched his knife, bowed, and raising the arras, dropped it again, and shaking his matted head, paused irresolutely.

"What is it now?" asked Redhall, taking the purse from his girdle. "Money?"

"No, no, Sir Adam, I never served ye for siller, but as my bounden duty; so I crave leave to remind ye that the place of forester up at Kinleith and Bonallie is vacant, and my sister's son, Tom Trotter, a deadly shot with bow and hackbut——"

"Enough; thy sister's son shall have the place of forester; and, for thee, methinks that the master's cloth of gold and diamond baldrick might serve for that, and to procure absolution to boot for the three of ye."

"We care not for that, Sir Adam," replied the pricker, "for we are among those who have seen the new light."

"And believe not in the delegated power of the priesthood; eh, is it so?"

Birrel nodded.

"Then why carriest thou that great rosary? I vow it looks like a fetter on thy wrist."

"As a blind."

"Lollards, Wickliffites—ha! ha! these new preachers of schism and heresy have made three creditable prose-lytes; yet, for thy soul's sake, Nichol (and there was a very perceptible sneer in the advocate's face as he said this), I hope thou art a true Catholic at heart; but away to thy comrades, for the night wears on, and Vipont hath not yet left the house of the Setons, for I have not heard the hoofs of his horse. To-morrow," continued Redhall, with a ghastly expression of ferocity, "to-morrow——"

"He shall be either in Catholic purgatory or Protes-

tant hell," grinned the pricker, as he raised the arras and retired.

The ghastly smile yet played upon the thin lips of Redhall.

"To-morrow I shall be freed of these fears, and for ever," he mused; "but at no distant period I must rid me of those three bloodhounds, who have stuck like burs to my skirts since first I took upon me this unhappy office of advocate to the king. Ha, and so they are heretics! Let them serve my purpose in this, and ere another week hath passed the cardinal shall have them under his inquisitorial eyes, and the stake will rid me and society of them for ever. Vipont, beware thee, now, for this night shall be the darkest in the calendar for thee and for thine!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE ILLUMINATED SPIRE.

“ Our pathway leads but to a precipice ;
And all must follow, fearful as it is !
From the first step 'tis known ; but—no delay !
On, 'tis decreed. We tremble and obey.”

ROGERS, *Human Life*.

TWELVE had tolled from the spire of the Netherbow Port, ere Vipont came forth from the Ashkirk Lodging, as the mansion was named (like other hotels of the Scottish noblesse), and taking his horse, rode through the archway. His heart was beating lightly, for the gentle pressure of a soft hand yet seemed to linger in his, and the kiss of a warm little lip was on his cheek. His breast was filled with joy, and his mind with the happiest anticipations of the future.

There was to be a grand masque or fête given by queen Magdalene to the ladies of the nobility on the night of the morrow, and Roland had resolved that an invitation should be sent to the ladies of Ashkirk, even should he beg it in person of the fair young sovereign ; and full of pleasure at the contemplation of how his beautiful Jane would outshine all her compeers, and how surely James, when he saw her, would recal all his edicts against the Setons of Ashkirk, he put spurs to his horse, and, stooping low, made him clear the archway with one bound.

The moon was up, and it rolled through a clear and starry sky. A few light and fleecy clouds that slept afar off in the bright radiance, seemed to float above the grim dark summits of the city, whose clusters of close piled mansions, turretted, gabletted and crow-stepped, tall and fantastic, stark and strong, started up ghostlike out of the depths of street and wynd, and stood in bold outline against the clear cold blue of the midnight sky.

As Roland left the archway, three dark figures, which he had not observed, shrunk close together; and when he issued forth, followed him with stealthy steps. They wore short black mantles, and had their bonnets pulled well over their faces; but though they lurked on the shadowy side of the street (which the bright light above rendered yet darker), the haft of a poniard, or knife, glittered at times under their upper garments, as they followed the master of the ordnance cautiously and softly, like cats about to spring on a mouse, and as noiselessly, for they were shod with felt, or some such material, that muffled their footsteps.

Vipont was about to descend towards the palace, near which he lived, in St. Anne's-yard, when a column of light in the west made him pause, and turn towards the centre of the town. A ball of fire was burning on the summit of St. Giles' steeple, and having heard that it was to be illuminated in honour of the queen's arrival and king's return, he resolved to see this unusual display; and riding up the Canongate to the strong barrier which separated the greater from the lesser burgh, he gave his horse to the care of the under warden of the porte, and from thence walked up the High-street with his long rapier under his arm.

The hour was late, but many persons were abroad,

and the windows were so full of faces, all gazing at the great tower of St. Giles that even had Vipont known that three assassins were on his track and only seeking an opportunity to plunge their poniards in his heart, he would not have felt much alarm.

The airy lantern of this magnificent church is formed by eight ribs of stone that spring from beautiful corbels, and meeting far above the bartizan of the great rood-spire, support a spacious gallery and lofty pinnacle, forming altogether an architectural feature of remarkable beauty, and which (save the church of St. Nicholas at Newcastle) is entirely peculiar to Scotland. It is a complete gothic diadem of stone. The rich crockets on the arches rise tier above tier, and represent the pearls; the parapets from which they spring, with their row of quatrefoils being in place of the circlet. The whole of this structure had been covered with variegated lamps, which had been brought from Italy, and were hung by the taste and skill of Father St. Bernard, one of the prebendaries, to the wonder and astonishment of the simple-minded citizens. As yet they were unlit, but a single light, we have said, was burning on the upper pinnacle, like a large red star, and to this every face was turned.

The stone crown of the cathedral was all in dark outline; a faint light shone through the large stained window at the east end, and the tapers flickered at the shrine of Our Lady that stood close by. Save these, all the vast church with its rows of massive buttresses and pointed windows was immersed in gloom, though the moonlight silvered the edges of the crocketed pinnacles. Suddenly a volume of light burst over the whole; the ball of fire which had been burning steadily, threw out a million of sparkles which fell like a haze of

brilliance over the arches of the spire, lighting up the diminutive lamps in rapid succession, until the whole structure seemed bathed in one broad sheet of coloured flame. The groined arches, the carved pinnacles, and all the airy tracery of the spire, were as plainly visible in their beautiful and grotesque detail as if the beholders had been close to them, instead of being a hundred and sixty feet below ; while the lamps of variegated glass produced the most extraordinary variety of light and shadow.

The devils, dragons, and other stone chimeras that projected from the battlements of the clerestory were all tipped with fiery red or ghastly blue light, and seemed to be vomiting flames; every pinnacle and tower of the cathedral stood forth in strong outline, one half being bathed in brilliant light, and the other sunk in black shadow, while a myriad prismatic hues were thrown upon the upturned and countless faces of the gaping crowds who occupied the streets below and the windows afound. Into the far depths of many a close and wynd, on the square tower of St. Mary-in-the-Field, on the clustered Bastelhouses of the castle, on the spire of the Netherbow, and square belfreys of the Holy Cross, on all the countless roofs and chimneys of the town, the light fell full and redly, scaring even the coot and the swan among the sedges of the Burghloch, and the eagle and the osprey on the lofty craigs of Salisbury.

Cries of astonishment and delight were heard from time to time, mingled with the murmurs of the wondering and the fearful, who, in accordance with the taste and superstition of the age, were, as usual, inclined to attribute the taste and skill which dictated this illumination to sorcery, simply because it was beyond their comprehension.

"Ye say true, my lord abbot," said a voice near Roland; "I have had mine own suspicions anent the fact."

"I have always secretly suspected this Father St. Bernard was a sorcerer; he studied at Padua and Salamanca, where there is more kenned of devilrie than theologie."

"He is confessor of the Countess of Ashkirk."

"Who hath a familiar, in the shape of a black page, anent whilk my lord advocate and I have had several conferences—but hush!"

Roland did not hear these last observations, which passed between the Abbot of Kinloss and one of the ten advocates of the new court.

Intent on the beauty of the illumination, Roland Vipont saw not the three muffled men who still dogged him, and from behind the grotesque columns of a stone arcade, which still stands opposite the old church (but is completely obscured by modern shops), were intently observing his motions while keeping their own concealed in shadow.

Having been long absent from his native capital, he gazed with admiration on the beautiful effect produced upon its picturesque and fantastic architecture, and he was just wishing that the ladies he had left were with him, to see this new and magnificent spectacle (which in their happiness he and Jane had completely forgotten), when several strong hands were laid violently upon his cloak and belt; he was suddenly dragged from the street, and hurried backwards nearly to the foot of one of those dark, narrow, and then solitary closes that descended abruptly towards the artificial lake, enclosing the city on the north.

So steep was the descent, and so sudden the impetus he received, that before Sir Roland could offer the least resistance, he was beaten to the earth, and the blow of more than one poinard struck sparks of fire from his tempered corslet.

Now deadly was the struggle that ensued ; but the three ruffians, in their very eagerness to destroy him, impeded and wounded each other; and though prostrate on the pavement, with his poniard under him, the knees of one bent on his breast, and the hands of another pressing on his throat, which, happily, was encircled by a thick ruff, Roland resisted manfully, his great natural strength and activity being increased by despair and rage. Grasping one by the ruff, he twisted it so as nearly to strangle him, and paralyze the efforts of his right hand, which brandished a long and double-edged poniard, that gleamed ominously in the dim light of the alley.

"God defend me!" he panted ; "must I perish here like a child, or a woman? Release me, villains, or I will spit you all like rabbits. Ho, armour! armour! treason and rescue!"

"No help is nigh thee!" answered Nichol Birrel, with his hyæna-like laugh; "but, curses choke thee, take thy hand from my throat!" and he raised his arm for the death-stroke, but Roland caught his descending hand by the wrist, while with a blow of his foot he hurled the third assailant, Sanders Screw, to the very bottom of the close. A howl from Birrel, at the same moment, announced that his companion had wounded him again, a mistake which raised his demon-spirit to a frightful pitch; and furiously he strove to free his wrist, and stab Roland between the joint of his corslet and

gorget. His eyes filled with a yellow light; he panted rather than breathed; he seemed no longer a man, but a devil!

Suddenly Roland found this maddened assailant had become too strong for him; and once again, but more feebly (for he had received a wound in the shoulder), he cried—

“Amour and rescue!”

“Knight and gentleman though ye be,” panted Birrel—“by hell! I will have thy blood for mine! Strike again, Dobbie, thou coward and dog! Ho, my gay cannoneer, ye are as a dead man now!”

“Thou liest, villain! take *that!*” cried a voice; and he received a blow from a staff which hurled him to the earth. Roland sprang up with a heart full of fury and his sword unsheathed; but his two remaining assailants rushed down the close, and disappeared along the rough bank of the loch before his confusion and giddiness would admit of his following them.

“By St. John, my good friend,” said he, adjusting his mantle and ruff, “thou comest at a critical time; a moment later had seen my corslet riddled.”

“Ay, and your doublet slashed after the comely Douglas fashion,” replied his preserver, whose plain coarse garb, as well as the knotty cudgel he carried, announced him a countryman or peasant.

“Good fellow, I owe thee my life,” said Roland, taking his purse from his girdle, “and would gladly yield some adequate recompence. Here, I fear me, there are but few Flemish ryders, and still fewer golden lions.”

“Tush!” replied the other, with a laugh, as he drew himself haughtily up; “dost offer money to me? Roland

Vipont, hast thou quite forgotten me? I am Archibald Earl of Ashkirk."

"Ashkirk!" reiterated Roland, in a faint whisper, as if he feared the very stones of the street would hear him. "My rash lord and friend," he added, taking the earl's hands within his own, "you know the risk of entering the gates of Edinburgh?"

"Bah!—my head; but who will venture to take it?"

"There is a price set upon it, nevertheless."

"A thousand merks of Scottish money?"

"True: might I not be false enough to win this sum, so tempting to a soldier?"

"Nay, friend Roland, for then thou wouldst lose my sister Jane."

"Lord earl, if discovered by any other than myself thou art lost."

"Perhaps so; but I shall take particular care to prevent all discovery. In fact, I mean to live for awhile in king James's own palace, where I do not think my enemies will ever dream of looking for me. The king's lances, and the riders of the east, west, and middle marches, have scoured the whole land for me, from Tweedmouth to Solway sands. Besides, I am resolved to see my mother, the countess, and my sister Jane, and endeavour to persuade my dear little Sybil to sojourn with me awhile at the court of England; for though it boasts of dames as fair as the world can show, I long ever for the black eyes and gentle voice of my quiet little cousin. Dost comprehend?"

"Rejoiced as I am to see you, Lord Ashkirk, for the memory of our old friendship, I would rather you were a thousand miles hence than standing to-night in the streets of Edinburgh."

The young noble laughed heartily.

"Methinks, Sir Captain of the Ordnance, it was fortunate for thee that I was not even one mile from this when those ruffians had thee at such vantage; but dost know wherefore they beset thee so?"

"Nay, not I; they were some villanous cut-purses, doubtless. Mass! I gave one a rough kick in the belt that will cure him of cloak-snatching for a time!"

"Nay, I opine more shrewdly thou art indebted to the third man in Scotland for this affair."

"The third, say you? How?—the first is the king."

"The second?" said the earl.

"His eminence the cardinal; but the third—who is he?"

"Who but Redhall, whom I would have sworn I heard one of these rogues cursing for sending them on such a devil's errand."

"Redhall!"

"Ay, doubtless; the great archpriest of judicial tyranny, the very spirit of oppression who sits brooding over the people and the peers of Scotland—he whose villanous panders are gorged and overgorged with gifts of escheat from our forfeited possessions, and are ever needy and inexorable."

"Sayest thou so? then by heavens I will have a sure assythemment of him for this."

"What other assythemment is requisite than a sword thrust?"

"But, 'fore God! I am in no way this man's enemy," replied Roland.

"All whom the king loves are his enemies."

"Still more so are those whom the king hates; witness his severe prosecution of the Douglasses. But we

all know, my lord, that the friendship of a Scottish king is too often a fatal gift to his subjects."

"Redhall's ambition is inordinate as that of Beaton; blood-guilty as that of Finnart, and his hatred is as that of the coiled up snake. By St. Bride! I know not which I hate most," exclaimed the rebellious earl, "James Stuart or his minion advocate."

"Hush, hush! lord earl," said Roland, as they slowly ascended the dark street, "for these words, if ever heard, would bring you to the scaffold ere the sun sets to-morrow."

"I crave pardon," replied the earl, with angry scorn, "I forgot that I spoke to a staunch adherent of this crowned oppressor of the Douglasses and their ally the house of Ashkirk."

"Noble earl, in this devotion to your mother's princely house you wrong our generous king, who, on his happy return to the capital of his ancestors, intended to have recalled all the lords now banished for the rebellion of Angus, and would, ere this late hour, have done so but for your recent inroad from the south, which has closed and steeled his heart against you and against them; and I know well that his able adviser, the stern Cardinal Beaton, devoted as he is to his country, and ever hostile to the grasping and aggressive spirit of England, will leave nothing unsaid to fan the king's vengeance and prompt his retaliation."

"I need not to be told what all Europe says; that James of Scotland allows himself to be led by the nose just as Redlegs and the old ruffs of his council please."

"*Redlegs!* soh! a ceremonious title for his eminence; I pray God, you have not become tainted by the damning heresies of this English Henry, who has so long

been your patron. But where did your lordship intend to dispose of yourself to-night?"

"Faith, I had not made up my mind; for in every change-house I entered, a copy of that proclamation for my apprehension was pasted over the chimney-piece; so, fearing recognition, as the summer night was short and warm, I had resolved to sleep like a moss-trooper on the green brae yonder by the loch, when your cry summoned me to the rescue, and I am here."

"'Twas a bright thought, that of yours, about Holyrood," said Vipont, "so, come with me to my apartment, for I know no place where you could be safer than in the very palace. None but the devil himself would dream of looking for you *there*, under the king's very nose."

"But my disguise is somewhat unlike the finery of your court gallants."

"Come with me to-night, and to-morrow we will think of something else."

"That will be necessary, for I am going to the queen's masque."

"What, thou?"

"Yes, I," replied the madcap earl. "What seest thou in that?"

"Thy discovery, arrest, condemnation, and execution; for God's sake, my lord, be not so criminally rash."

"Fear not, I will never compromise thee."

"I have no fear of that, but——"

"Fear nought else, then, for I have resolved to go, and words are useless."

They had talked so long in the dark alley, that when they issued from its archway into the street opposite the church of St. Giles, the lights on the spire were all extinguished, and the crowd had dispersed. The whole

façade of the edifice rose before them in dark outline, and the only light that tipped its pinnacles was the slanting lustre of the brilliant moon, as she seemed to sail to the westward through the pure blue of the star-studded sky.

One o'clock rang from the Netherbow spire as Roland and the earl passed it, so that the events of this chapter occupied exactly an hour.

CHAPTER VII.

TWO OFFICIALS.

“ *Pedro.* Would to God it might be so !
Thou twin to Satan, beautiful deceit !
I almost wish I'd never met with thee.
Yet the scheme's good—the scheme's exceeding good.

Edward the Black Prince.

THE lord advocate was sitting in his library or study, which we have already described to the reader. Reclined in a softly cushioned easy chair, he was gazing listlessly at the mass of papers that covered his writing-table, which was of grotesquely-carved oak, and all of which he had to examine ; but thoughts, to him of a more vital interest, occupied his mind, and he recoiled with disgust from the every-day task of public business. More than an hour passed away, and the advocate still sat dreamily, with his docquets of inhibitions and arrestments, letters of law-burrowes, indictments, and other criminal papers, lying pell-mell among secret information sent him from his correspondents on the English borders and the Highland frontier, among the turbulent islesmen of the west, and the intriguing Douglasses nearer the capital. All these he had to peruse, to consider and consign to different portfolios, making comments and memorandums thereon, so as to have them all ready for service at a moment's notice, whenever the

suspected noble, baron, or burgess should be arrested and indicted before the new and obnoxious court.

The information lodged by enemies against each other was of the most diverse description.

One baron lodged a secret complaint that another was meditating an inroad into England in time of peace; that another had been selling cattle to the English contrary to law; while a third complained that for three weeks he had been besieged in his own castle, and battered by the cannon of a neighbouring feudatory.

One burgess reported another for "girnelling mair victual than was required for his own sustenance," against which there was then a wise law, that in these our days would have pressed heavily upon corn-factors and other oppressors of the poor; one had lost his horses, another his cattle, another his corn, and another his wife, all by dint of sword and spear; and there were innumerable complaints anent Highland sorners, border hamesuckers, and landless Egyptians, who forcibly quartered themselves in houses and villages, and dwelt there until everything was eaten up in girdel, byre, and barn. Among other papers were numerous informations against and warrants required for the arrest of Englishmen who had come into Scotland without the *safe conduct* demanded and rendered necessary by the twelfth parliament of James II.; for the prosecution of those who slew the king's lieges in street and roadway, and against others who slew hares in time of snow. Warrants against lairds for storming each other's castles, and thieves who broke into farm dovecots; and countless accusations of sorcery brought by the ignorant against those whose little discoveries and inventions would now, perhaps, have won for them patents from the crown, and fellowships of the Royal Society.

The whole of the last night and half of the next day had passed without his bravoës having returned.

The advocate began to fear that Vipont had proved victorious, and either killed or captured his assailants. In either case Redhall knew well suspicions would fall heavily upon himself, for ever since the murder of the Knight of Bombie, at the north door of St. Giles, he had borne a somewhat evil repute in the minds of many. He glared impatiently at a large dialstone on a house opposite; it indicated the meridian, and he was about to buckle on his sword and poniard, preparatory to issuing forth in search of news, when heavy and irregular steps were heard ascending the stair; a coarse and muscular hand made several ineffectual attempts to raise the arras, a movement which nearly caused the owner to topple over on his nose, and half scrambling in, Nichol Birrel, balancing himself on each leg alternately, and looking rather discomposed from the potations and encounter of the past night, stood before his feudal lord and judicial patron.

"How now, thou presumptuous villain!" said Redhall, looking round for his cane, "is it thus thou appearest before me?"

"Ay, ay—just as you see," hiccupped Nichol.

"Drunk?"

"Rather so, Sir Adam—that is—my lord."

"Sot! I verily believe thou wert born drunk. And where, then, is this Vipont now?"

"I neither ken nor care, for he escaped us."

"Am I then to believe, sot and slug-a-bed, that with all thy boasting thou hast failed?"

"Even so, in part."

"Dog! I will have your ears cut off for this."

"Bide ye there, Sir Adam," said the ruffian, depre-

catingly, while he ground his teeth at his master's anger, "I have gien him a wound that he will carry to his grave; but God's plague on your feuds, Redhall, for in your service I have gotten a slash o' the knuckles that shall gar me rue lang the last night."

"Here is a pretty rascal!" exclaimed the advocate, almost beside himself with anger.

"I would some douce damsel said as muckle," said this overgrown gnome, contemplating his visage with one of his frightful leers, in a mirror opposite.

"Peace, fellow! And thou livest to tell me that he actually escaped from three of ye? He must be the very devil himself, this Roland Vipont! Have you all returned alive?"

"All; Nichol, Dobbie, and Sanders Screw—safe and sound, like the three kings o' Cologne in the Black Friary up bye there."

"Silence! 'tis blasphemy, this."

"Murder at night, and blasphemy in the morning. Ewhow, sirs, but that d—d mum-beer was strong yesternight."

"Thou gavest him a wound, thou sayest?" resumed Redhall, whose strong and relentless mind was of that description which, when once it conceived an idea, would pursue its accomplishment to the very verge of the earth; and moreover, feeling confident that those laws which he meted out so severely to others, could never recoil upon, or entangle himself, he did whatever he pleased. "Was this wound a deep one?"

"So Dobbie swears, but he's a gomerall body in these respects. Yet, if ye will it, Sir Adam, as monk or apothegar, or something else, I may find my way to his chamber ere he is awake some morning, and probe the scar anew wi' my poniard. Even gif I were ta'en in his

chamber 'twouldna matter muckle, as no *new* scar would be seen, and blood flowing would be attributed to the auld gash."

"'Tis not a bad scheme, then see to it as you please; but now I mistrust ye all, and think that, were I to fight him with my own more legal weapons, the pen and the parchment, he would assuredly be vanquished. We shall see," mused the advocate; "I may have him one day before the lords on some desperate charge (he loves a lady of the Douglas faction) proofs of conspiracy might soon be foisted up, and if we once had him under the hands of Sanders Screw——"

Birrel mechanically felt for his steel needle.

"Nay," said Redhall, with a grim smile, as he observed this motion, "Vipont is a mere soldier, and thou knowest that a soldier is seldom deep or designing enough to be a conjuror. Now prythee, rascal, act soberly, and assist me to dress and truss my points with care; for I am to dine with his eminence the cardinal and the lord bishop of Limoges to-day, and thereafter we are all going to the queen's masque at Holyrood. Bring me the last taffety dress that was sent me from that French stallanger at the Tron, with my silver walking sword—and the little poniard—hath Hew the dalmascar sent it from his booth in the Bow? oh, here it is," added Redhall, stepping into an apartment that opened off the library, and to which (as we may still see in old houses) there was an ascent of two or three steps. This was his dressing-room, and formed a square turret which projected on heavy stone corbels over the pavement of the Canongate.

An antique mirror, imbedded in an oak frame, stood on one side; a basin stand furnished with a pewter basin and ewer (such as the Leith traders then brought

out of Flanders) stood on the other ; and between them was a large cabinet, one door of which was open, showing the various laced dresses, doublets, gowns, ruffs, and collars, mantles, tags, tassels, and aiguillettes, which made up the wardrobe of this official, whose ample judicial robe was carelessly thrown over a large high-backed chair, against which and on which were piled pieces of armour, swords, gloves, gauntlets, foils, poniards, and wheelock-pistols ; showing, that though a civil officer of state, Redhall could assume the offensive as well as any swashbuckler or cavalier of his day ; and not many weeks had elapsed since, at the head of three hundred men-at-arms, he had been severely repulsed in an attempt to sack and burn the tower of his neighbour, Sir James Foulis, of Colinton, the lord clerk register.

A jerkin of black velvet, with open sleeves of dark purple satin, embroidered all over with silver, black trunk breeches slashed with purple silk, and black hose, with shoes round-toed and slashed, formed his principal attire. Over the close jerkin he threw a loose "cassock coate" of black silk, the collar of which was tied by silver cords under his thick close ruff, and from thence it was open, though furnished with twenty-four buttons of Bruges silver.

Over this he hung his shoulder-belt, which sustained a long and slender walking sword, having a hilt of curiously cut steel and silver net-work ; thus, everything about him was either dark or silver, save the solitary white feather which adorned his black velvet bonnet, and gave a smart and lofty bearing to his noble head, which a grave dark visage, piercing eyes, and fierce moustache completed.

His ruffian dependent, who to his public official duties united the private one of valet, had scarcely given

the last finishing-touch to this elaborate costume when the clatter of hoofs drew Redhall to the window, and he saw the master of the ordnance, with his plumes waving, his polished corslet, his embroidered dress, and rich gold aiguillettes glittering in the sunshine, ride up the street. A tall, stout serving-man, clad in a half suit of ribbed armour, wearing that kind of close helmet which was then called a coursing-hat, and carrying over his shoulder a mighty two-handed wall-sword, nearly as long as himself, followed close at his heels, running as if for his life.

(This armed valet was no other than the Earl of Ashkirk.)

Almost at the same moment, as if she had been watching for the sound of the hoofs, Jane Seton appeared at an opposite window, which she threw open. There was a radiant smile on her bright face as she kissed her hand to the handsome cavalier, who uncovered and bowed to his horse's mane; and there was a happy expression in his eyes, a gallant and adventurous air about him, that, with the splendour of his attire, failed not to impress even Redhall; for, as Vipont saluted his charming mistress, the spirited animal he rode approached her sideways, keeping his front to the windows, curvetting, prancing, and shaking his flowing mane and the silver ornaments of the embossed bridle.

"St. Mary!" muttered the advocate, while he bit his thin lips, and a fierce smile twinkled in his eyes, "how she welcomes him!—an empty fool, who hath no thought beyond his ruffs and his aiguillettes, and who, though he hath scarcely a cross in his pouch, is doubtless ready to cut the throat of any man who doubts him rich as Cræsus, and able to purchase the three Lothians."

Charged with an invitation secretly obtained from the queen, for the ladies of Ashkirk, Roland was in high spirits, for he had procured it through the influence of Madame de Montreuil, the governess of Magdalene; and, with his face all smiles, he sprung from his horse and entered the mansion.

Lady Jane disappeared from the window.

Then Redhall ground his teeth, and turned furiously away, for then he knew that the happy lovers had met, and were together.

He hurriedly left his house, and descending the Blackfriars Wynd to the Archiepiscopal Palace, a fragment of which is still prominent by its large octagon tower which overhangs the Cowgate, he was admitted by the cardinal's armed vassals, or guards, at a low-browed doorway, surmounted by the coat armorial of Bethune and Balfour, over which was the broad-tasselled hat, which indicates a prince of the holy Roman empire.

There, at dinner, Redhall heard from his friend, the abbot of Kinloss, the rumour which was then current in the city, that "the master of the king's ordnance had been most malapertly beset upon the Hiegait, by a party of the Douglas traitors," from whom he had been only saved by a miraculous exertion of valour; for (as Buchanan relates) whatever happened in those days was invariably placed to the score of the Douglasses.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE QUEEN'S MASQUE.

"Old Holyrood rung merrily
That night, with wassail, mirth, and glee:
King James, within her princely towers,
Feasted the chiefs of Scotland's powers."

Marmion.

ATTENDED by Ashkirk, who carried the tremendous sword before mentioned, and was arrayed in clothes somewhat sad-coloured, but in fashion between those of a valet and esquire, Roland, agitated by no ordinary fear and exultation, approached the illuminated hall of the palace—fear, because, despite every warning, the madcap noble insisted on accompanying him—and exultation, because Jane Seton and her companions were all to be there; though the haughty old countess had coldly declined, on the plea of age and ill health, which, in reality, was caused by dread of the risk so foolishly run by her son, whom she had implored, with tears, to seek shelter among his own vassals in Forfarshire, if he could not regain the court of England; for the frontiers were said to be closely watched.

With his doublet of cloth-of-gold, all dotted with seed pearls, a short purple velvet mantle, lined with yellow satin, dangling from his left shoulder, his gold aiguillettes, ruff, and sword, Roland had donned his

best bravery, curled his dark locks, and pointed his mustachioes with particular care on this auspicious evening. He carried his bonnet in his hand, as they traversed the crowded courts of the palace; and every minute he turned to look anxiously at Ashkirk, but his peculiar helmet, with its low peak, and the thick beard, which he had permitted to grow long for disguise, together with his bombasted doublet, completely transformed him, and he marched behind, bearing his six-foot rapier with an air of imperturbable gravity.

The gloomy and antique courts overlooked by grated windows and heavy roofs of stone, the cloistered passages and vast stone stairs of this ancient palace (which was burnt by the English) were lighted with numerous coloured lamps. The king's guard, wearing their blue bonnets, stockings and doublets of scarlet, slashed and faced with black, and armed with pike, poniard, and arquebuse, formed two glittering lines from the palace gate to the main entrance, and from thence along the passages to the head of the grand staircase, where stood their captain, Sir John Forrester of Corstorphine, a handsome and reckless-looking young gallant, clad in the uniform colours of the guard (a jerkin of scarlet velvet, richly lined with Venetian gold), and having twelve short aiguillettes on each shoulder of his trunk sleeves, which terminated in steel gauntlets, for he wore his gorget, and, being on duty, had an esquire near him, who carried his helmet.

His lieutenant, Louis Leslie of Balquhan, in the Garioch, was similarly arrayed; and both were remarkably elegant and military looking young men.

"Holy mass!" said Forrester, looking down the long staircase, "here cometh Vipont, and his new valet with the outrageous sword!"

"'Fore God! he looks like one of the twelve peers of Charlemagne," said Leslie, with a loud laugh.

"Ho! Vipont, where the devil didst steal that ancient paladine?"

"'Tis the excalibur of King Arthur he carries," said Leslie.

"'Tis the lance of Urganda the Unknown!"

And the young men laughed aloud as their friend ascended the stair with his tall valet three paces behind. When he drew near, Forrester playfully made a pass with his sword at Roland's face, a second at his breast, and a third at his ruff, keeping him down the stair. The cannoneer immediately unsheathed his rapier, and simply saying—

"Guard!" attacked his assailant in the same playful manner; and they fenced for more than a minute, while Louis Leslie held his sides, and laughed boisterously on seeing that Vipont found the impossibility of ascending, and was beginning to lose his temper.

The approach of Cardinal Beaton, who was surrounded by a large body of vassals wearing his own livery, put an end to this dangerous frolic; and though openly saluted by the king's soldiers, the cardinal's guards were secretly greeted with haughty and supercilious glances as they marched between the double ranks that led to the foot of the grand staircase, jostling as they ascended the train of Sir Thomas Clifford, the ambassador of England—a country which the cardinal abhorred politically and religiously.

"Harkee, Forrester," said Roland, as he passed; "have the ladies of Ashkirk arrived yet?"

"Yes, some ten minutes ago. I was thunderstruck to see them!"

"Wherefore?"

"Hast thou not heard the rumour?"

"Of what?"

"That the Earl of Ashkirk is among us here, in the good town of Edinburgh."

"Twenty devils! dost thou say so?"

"'Tis a fact—on some treasonable mission from English Henry—at least, so sayeth my lord advocate."

Roland's blood ran alternately hot and cold.

"This demon advocate hears of everything!" said he to the earl, as they passed along the corridor. "My God! lord earl, if discovered——"

"Thou canst save me perhaps," said the earl, who was himself a little alarmed.

"If not?"

"I can die then, with my sword in my hand," replied the earl, through his teeth. "But art thou not rich in the favour of this holiday king?"

"In that alone; otherwise, I am poor enough, God wot."

"Thy father left thee——"

"His sword, his arms, and motto—nothing more. The first is here at my side—the second, I know by heart, having nought else whereon to grave them—*gules, six annulets or*."

"Tush! thou wilt build thee a castle some day, and put the crest above the gate."

"A swan's head winged, rising from a ducal coronet—ha! ha! my father was a soldier, and poor, as we soldiers always are."

"'Tis a mad-cap adventure, this, I know right well," said the earl; "but I have armed me (*sans leave*) with your best corslet; and as I have a strong affection for my poor head (which is, in fact, of no use to any one save myself), they shall never possess it if my hands can keep it. If I am beset to-night—fiends! I would

mow them all down with this long blade, like death with his scythe."

"St. Mary! use it warily," said Roland, laughing; "thou wilt punch a hole in the roof else."

"Thou lovest this king James well?"

"Love him—yes. I am ready to be cut in pieces for him to-morrow."

"Still thou art poor!"

"I have quite made up my mind to be rich at some future day, but *when* that day shall come, the Lord alone knows," replied Roland, without perceiving that the earl was covertly ridiculing his loyalty to James.

Notwithstanding his disguise, the whole air and bearing of Ashkirk were eminently noble. Though brave and passionate, he veiled a promptitude to anger under an outwardly impassible equanimity of temper; thus, while he could be at one time rash to excess, at another he could affect to be doggedly cool. He had innumerable excellent qualities of head and heart, which would have rendered him of inestimable value to such a prince as James V.; but his blind devotion to the faction of Angus (a faction of which we will treat more at large elsewhere) rendered them nugatory. Though considerably above the middle height, he was strong, elegant, and graceful. His nose was almost aquiline; his eyes were dark and piercing; his mouth was like that of a Cæsar; and his well-defined chin was indicative of that obstinacy of purpose, which is a leading feature of the Scottish character; and like every gentleman of his time, he rode, fenced, and danced to perfection.

Roland sighed when he thought on all these lost good qualities, and bestowing a parting glance on the earl, who, as his valet, was obliged to leave him at the

large gothic door of the hall, he passed through with the guests, who were ushered between a double line of pages and liverymen. The chamberlain of the household waved his wand, and announced—

“ Sir Roland Vipont of that ilk, master of the king’s ordnance.”

In one little heart only, amid all the gay throng in that magnificent hall, did the name of the king’s first favourite find an echo.

Two hundred wax-lights, in branching chandeliers, illuminated the high arched roof and lofty walls of the vast apartment, which was decorated with all that florid ornament and grandeur which we find in the palaces of James V. It was one of his new additions to the regal mansion which his uncle Albany, and his father, James IV., had first engrafted on the old monastic edifice of the Holy Cross. In honour of the queen, the walls were hung with arras composed of resplendent cloth-of-gold and silver, impaled with velvet, and the floors were covered with Persian carpets, which were among the gifts received by James V. from Francis I.*

On one side the arras was festooned to reveal the refreshment-rooms which lay beyond, and the long tables, whereon lay every continental delicacy, with the richest wines of France and Italy, all of which the poorest Scottish artizan could procure duty free, before the union. There, too, lay one of the queen’s cupboards of silver plate, which was valued at more than a

* “ *Item.* Foure suitts of rich arras hangings of 8 pices a suitt, wroght with gold and silke.

“ *Item.* Foure suitts of hangings of cloth-of-gold-silver, impaled with velvett.

“ *Item.* 20 Persian carpets, faire and large.”—See list of “gifts and propynes,” *Balfour’s Annales*, vol. i. pp. 266, 7.

hundred thousand crowns, and watched by four of the royal guard, with their arquebuses loaded. Chairs covered with white velvet, brocaded with gold, and surmounted by imperial crowns, and sofas or settles of purple velvet, were ranged along the sides of these rooms; but the great hall was cleared of all obstruction for the dancers. The king's musicians, among whom were the four drummers, the four trumpeters, and three flute-players of the queen's French band, all clad in yellow satin, occupied the music gallery, and were just striking up king James's favourite march, *The Battle of Harlaw*, which was then very popular in Scotland, and remained so down to the time of Drummond of Hawthornden.

Amid the crowd of ladies, nobles, and splendidly attired cavaliers, who thronged the vast length of that great apartment, seeming as one mass of velvet, silk, satin, and waving plumage of every hue, mingled with jewels that sparkled and lace that glittered, aiguillettes, swords and mantles, poniards and spurs, trains, ruffs and knightly orders—surrounded by a sea of light, for the gleaming cloth of gold that covered the walls seemed nothing else—Roland looked anxiously, but in vain, for Lady Seton, as he walked straight towards the upper end, to present himself to the king and queen.

James leaned on the side of Magdalene's chair, conversing with her and the six privileged ladies of honour, who sat near her, three being on each side, occupying little stools, which were covered with blue velvet, and called tabourettes. Among this group were Madame de Montreuil, Mademoiselle de Brissac, and several noble Frenchwomen, who had known Vipont in France, and greeted with a smile of welcome.

James was magnificently clad in his favourite dress

of white brocaded satin, slashed with rose-coloured silk. His four orders (the first in Europe) sparkled on his neck, and the band of his slouched blue bonnet shone like a zone with diamonds. His rich brown hair fell in ringlets on his ruff, and his dark hazel eyes were bright with gaiety and pride. He wore a short mantle, a long sword, sheathed in blue velvet, buff boots, and gold spurs. His white silk stockings were the first seen in Scotland, and the motto of the Garter encircled his left leg.

With that frankness which made him so charming to all, this handsome young monarch immediately approached Sir Roland, and met him half way.

"Here comes my Vipont!" said he; "ah! thou art a fine fellow, Roland. I would know thee for a noble, or a soldier, at a league's distance, by that inimitable bearing of thine."

Roland bowed profoundly; but the king took his hand, while many a fierce glance was exchanged between the various nobles who beheld the warm reception of this rising favourite.

"And so, my poor Vipont, thou wert attacked last night?"

"A mere joke, your majesty."

"Three daggers are no joke; but you were wounded?"

"Oh, a mere scratch with a pin."

"Dost suspect any one as having caused it?"

"Your majesty alone," replied Roland, with a peculiar smile at the group around the king; "for your favour is ever fatal to your friends."

"Doubtless," said James, with a darkening brow, "it hath been some of those accursed—" (Douglassses, he was about to say, but on seeing how quickly the

colour mounted to Vipont's brow he said) "cloak-snatchers, and cut-purses, who make their lair in the Burghmuir-woods, and elsewhere; but this must be looked to, sirs! such doings cannot be permitted in our burghs and landward towns."

They conversed in the old court Scots, then "the language of a whole country" (says Lord Jeffrey in one of his able essays), an independent kingdom, still separate in laws, character, and manners; a language by no means common to the vulgar, but the common speech of the whole nation in early life, and connected in their imagination, not only with that olden time which is uniformly conceived as being more simple, pure, and lofty than the present, but also with all the soft bright colours of remembered childhood and domestic affection."

Roland advanced at once towards the young queen, who gave him her hand to kiss, and received him with her brightest smile; for his face had become familiar to her in the king's train, at her father's court.

"Ah! Monsieur le Maître d'Artillerie," she said, in a very sweet voice, "thou seemest quite like an old friend, and remindest me so much of my father's house at St. St. Germain-en-Laye—that pretty little hunting-lodge, near the Seine, where I was so happy—though not so happy as I am here—*O Dieu me pardonne*, no," she added, with covert glance at the king full of the utmost affection.

"My dear Madame de Montreuil," said Roland, in a low voice; "express for me to her majesty the thousand thanks I owe you and her for the favour shown to my friends."

This charming daughter of queen Claud the Good was (as we have elsewhere said) only in her sixteenth

year. Her fair brown hair, of which she had a great profusion, was most becomingly arranged in plaits and curls; her eyes were of the most beautiful blue; her small velvet cap, squared at the temples, and falling straight down each cheek, was blue, lined with white satin, and edged with little pearls; her skirt was all of frosted cloth-of-gold, with a body of violet-coloured satin, embroidered also with gold, and having hanging sleeves of the richest lace lined with latticed ribbons; her gloves were highly perfumed; and around her neck was a gift of the Countess of Arran—a string of those large and snow-white pearls, that in the olden time were found in the burn of Cluny. She frequently sighed, as if with pain and weariness, and pressed a hand at times upon her breast.

Having now paid his devoirs to the young queen, Roland scrutinized the glittering throng for the fair form of her who, though perhaps less beautiful than the gentle Magdalene, was to him the queen indeed of all the ladies there.

“Vipont,” said the king, coldly, as he drew Roland aside, “I know for whom thou art looking—for one whose brother is under sentence of forfeiture, the price of his head being at this moment written on the palace gates; for one whom, I can assure thee, Sir Roland, should not have been under the roof-tree of Holyrood to-night, but for the kind wishes of her majesty and Madame de Montreuil, whose weak side I see thou hast attained, as any handsome gallant may easily do.”

Roland's heart sank at these words.

“Alas! your majesty,” he replied, in the same low voice, “are the houses of Douglas and Seton fallen so low, that a fair young being, who unites the blood of

both in her pure and sinless heart is merely tolerated in Holyrood? Your royal sire, around whom so many brave men of both these names fell on that dark day at Flodden, foresaw not a time like this."

"There is truth in this, though I have the deepest cause for enmity to these families that ever king had to a subject," replied James, frankly. "The mere rebellion of Earl John of Ashkirk I might have forgotten, and that of his son I could have forgiven, but his leaguings with Englishmen never! And yonder stands my little rebel, Jane of Ashkirk; faith, she *is* beautiful—yea, as love herself!"

"I think her inferior to the queen."

"With all thy partiality? Rogue, thou flatterest me! A true lover should deem his lady-love inferior to none under God!"

"I have heard that she is as much famed for her beauty as her mother is for her salves and recipes," said a Hamilton, with a very unmistakeable sneer.

"Nay, Sir John of Kincavil," said the king, "thou art too severe to be gallant. I will swear that her hair is the finest I ever saw."

"And her teeth," said young Leslie of Balquhan.

"And her skin, which is like the finest velvet!" said Roland, simply.

"Ah, the devil! thou hast discovered *that*!" said the king—and several courtiers and soldiers laughed. "I must really see this fair one," he whispered; she looks at you, Sir Roland. Ah! I see—'tis the unmistakeable glance of a woman at the man she loves. I find I am about to lose my master of the ordnance."

"Sir John of Kincavil," said Roland, in a low voice, as he passed that tall and brilliantly attired knight;

"at noon to-morrow I will be waiting you at the Water Gate."

"I shall bring my best rapier," replied the other, with a bow.

"And a pot of the countess's salve," said Roland, with a dark smile, as they mutually bit their gloves in defiance, and passed on.

During the presentation of Roland to the queen and this colloquy with the king, Lady Jane Seton, who had not yet been presented to Magdalene, felt herself somewhat unpleasantly situated. Her companions, Marion Logan and Alison Hume, had both disappeared in the crowd, the first with the well known Norman Leslie, Master of Rothes, and the second with Sir John Forrester, of the king's guard; while, quite oblivious of the many hostile eyes around, the beautiful Sybil, with a large fan outspread before her, had thrown aside her usual sadness, and, exhilarated with the gaiety of the scene, was coquetting and smiling to a gay crowd of young cavaliers, to whose jests and gallantries she was replying, however, with the words alone, for her thoughts were concentrated on the tall valet, whom she had seen more than once at the opposite doorway, armed with his portentous rapier.

The hostile eyes were those of the Hamilton faction, which was always in the ascendant when the power of the Douglasses was at a low ebb; and thus, marvelling how the sister of the exiled earl had found her way into their privileged and exclusive circle, cold, haughty, and inquiring glances met those of the timid Jane, whose cheeks began to crimson with anger. She had now lost the thoughtless Sybil; she saw not her lover; and amid that vast crowd found herself utterly alone. Margaret

Countess of Arran, the ladies of Barncleugh and Evan-dale, Dalserf and Drumrye, of Raploch, and others, all wives and daughters of knights and gentlemen of the hostile surname, were gazing stolidly upon her.

Cardinal Beaton, clad in his scarlet cope and baretta, with a gold cross upon his breast, was standing near her, conversing with a prelate in purple. This was the French Bishop of Limoges, in the Vienne, to whom, with his right forefinger laid on the palm of his left hand, he was impressively holding forth on "the damnable persuasions of the English heretics, whose perverse doctrines were spreading schisms and scandals in the holy church in Scotland." His large, dark, and thoughtful eyes, which were (inadvertently however) fixed on Jane, completed her confusion. The great and terrible cardinal was evidently speaking of her; she felt almost sinking when the crowd around fell back, and the king, with her lover, approached to her relief.

CHAPTER IX.

LA VOLTA.

"Yet is there one, the most delightful kind,
A lofty jumping, or a leaping round,
Where, arm in arm, two dancers are entwined,
And whirl themselves, with strict embracements bound,
And still their feet an anapest do sound:
An anapest is all their music's song,
Whose first two feet are short, and third is long."

Orchestra, by Sir J. DAVIES, 1596.

"MAY I present to your majesty," said Roland, "the Lady Jane Seton, the only daughter of brave Earl John of Ashkirk——"

"Who thrice saved my father's banner at Flodden—a right royal welcome to Holyrood, madam," said James, bowing gracefully and low, while all his hostility vanished as he gazed on the pure open brow and clear eyes of Jane; "but how is this, Sir Roland? thou oughtest to have introduced me to the lady, not the lady to *me*—the knight to the dame—the inferior to the superior. But hark! the music is striking 'Kinge Willyiam's Notte;' 'tis a *round* we are to dance—Lady Jane, wilt favour me—your hand for this measure; see, my Lord Arran is leading forth the queen."

And thus, almost before she had time for reflection, Jane found herself led to the head of that shining hall, the partner of king James, who had seen the hostile

eyes that were bent upon her, had seen how their cold glances thawed into smiles at his approach, and resolved, by a striking example, to rebuke the malicious spirit he despised.

Roland finding himself anticipated, had now no desire to dance, and wishing to follow Jane with his eyes, retired among the spectators, whose hostile remarks more than once made him bite his glove and grasp the pommel of his poniard.

The dancers were performing the round, a species of country-dance, which continued in fashion while quadrilles were in futurity, and until the time of Charles I.

The king's principal favourite, James Hamilton, Earl of Arran (afterwards the Regent Duke of Chatelherault, knight of St. Michael), a stately noble, arrayed in dark violet-coloured velvet becoming his years and grave diplomatic character, led forth the bright young queen. There were about thirty couples on the floor, all the gentlemen wearing high ruffs, short mantles, and immense long swords. The captain of the guards, and Leslie, his lieutenant, were with Alison Hume and Marion Logan. At a given signal, a burst of music came from the balcony, and the dancers began with that spirit and grace which belonged to the olden time, and then the whole hall vibrated with joy and happiness, brilliancy and praise; for if the king was the most finished cavalier in Scotland, Magdalene was assuredly the fairest young being that had ever worn its diadem.

The great earl of Arran acquitted himself, however, very much to the queen's dissatisfaction; for this thoughtful statesman and favourite minister was confounded to find Lady Seton dancing with the king, and knew not what to think of this sudden and dangerous change in his sentiments towards the Douglas party.

Above the well-bred hum of modulated voices in the hall, a loud uproar of tongues in one of the courts below drew Roland to the windows more than once.

"By heaven, they have discovered Ashkirk!" was his first thought. But the noise was occasioned by the king's jester, Jock Macilree, frolicking among the pages, lacqueys, and yeomen of the guard, with his cap-and-bells, bladder, and fantastic dress, exercising on the poor black page, Sabrino, that wit which, for the present, was excluded from the royal circle, as his rough jests, boisterous laughter, and grotesque aspect, terrified and agitated the timid young queen.

"God keep you, Sir Roland Vipont," said a flute-like voice (with the usual greeting for which our more homely "How are you?" is now substituted). Roland turned, and bowed on encountering the grave face and keen dark eyes of the lord advocate.

"God keep you, Sir Adam," he replied, rather coldly, as may be easily supposed. "Understanding that you laboured under a severe illness, I did not expect the pleasure of meeting you here."

"As little did I expect the honour of meeting *you*, having heard that you had received an unfortunate wound."

"Ah! a scratch, as your lordship heard me tell the king," replied Roland, colouring with indignation; but the face of Redhall was impassible as that of a statue.

"Courtiers must expect such scratches at times."

"Under favour, my lord, I am no courtier."

"No, excuse me—better than a thousand courtiers—thou art a brave soldier."

Roland bowed.

"He flatters me for some end," thought he. There was a mixture of politeness and disdain in the manner of Redhall that was fast provoking Roland, for they

had never spoken before, save once, more than a year ago, on the king's service. "Can this really be the villain who attempted to slay me," he reflected, "or hath the hostility of Ashkirk led his ears into error? I think not; for, strange to say, my wound *smarted* the moment he addressed me. Doubtless, had I been dead, it would have bled at his touch."

"You know, Sir Roland, 'tis my peculiar province to have the laws enforced. Have you any suspicions of who your assailant was?"

"Yes, the instigator of the assault is here to-night—yea, in this very hall!"

"His name?"

"Is written on the blade of my sword, where I am wont to keep such memorandums," replied Roland, with a glance which made the official start, change colour, and raise his eye-brows with an expression of surprise, as he turned away; for at that moment the king came up, the dance having ended, and the blood mounted to the temples of Redhall, for Lady Jane Seton was leaning on his arm.

"How now, lord advocate?" said the frank monarch, "why so grave and so grim? Thou art a sorely changed man now! Dost thou remember when we two were but halfling callants at our tasks together, in the barred chambers of David's tower, trembling under terror of old Gavin's ferrule—Gavin Dunbar, the poor prisoner of my uncle Albany?"

"And how oft we played truanderie together," replied the advocate, with a faint smile.

"To seek birds'-nests in the woods of Coates, throw kailcastocks down the wide lums of the Grassmarket, and fish for powowets in the Nor'loch. By St. Paul! those were indeed the happy days of guileless hearts;

for, if we quarrelled, we beat each other until we were weary, and thenceforward became better friends than ever. But how cometh it that thou, my gay cannoneer, hast not had a measure to-night, and when no dance seems perfect without thee? Madame de Montreuil and some of our French demoiselles are anxious to dance *la volta*, which was all the rage at the fêtes of king Francis; but not one of our Scottish gallants knoweth the least about it, save thyself."

"I am sure the lady Jane does, and if she will favour me with her hand, and your majesty will spare her——"

"To thee only will I, for I long now to speak with mine own true love," and, with a graceful smile, James retired to the group that remained around the young queen and her dames of the tabourette.

The feeble health of Magdalene was apparent to all by the languor and alternate flushing and pallor of her face, after the trifling exercise of *la ronde*.

As Vipont led away Lady Jane, Redhall turned to conceal his sudden emotion. He faced a mirror, and was startled at his own expression. Swollen like cords, the veins rose on his forehead like lines painted there. Jane had gone off without even bestowing on him a smile or a bow. She had quite forgotten his presence. He felt painfully that in her mind there would, doubtless, be a mighty gulf between himself and this gay young soldier, whose light spirit and chivalric heart were so entirely strangers to that burning jealousy and passionate desire of vengeance that struggled for supremacy with love. He passed a hand over his pale brow, as if to efface the emotion written there, and turned again with his wonted smile of coldness and placidity to address the person nearest him. This chanced to be no other than his gossip, the abbot of Kinloss, a peep-

eyed little churchman, whose head and face, as they peered from his ample cope, so strongly resembled those of a rat looking forth from a hole, that no other description is required.

The ambassador of the great Charles V., a richly-dressed cavalier in black, on whose breast shone the gold cross of Calatrava and the silver dove of Castile, and whose scarf of scarlet and gold sustained a long spada of the pure Toledo steel, now appeared on the Persian-carpeted floor, leading Madame de Montreuil, a gay little Frenchwoman in white brocade, which stuck out all round her nearly six feet in diameter; Roland and Lady Seton were their *vis-à-vis*. All eyes were upon them, for the dance was so completely new, that none in Scotland had ever seen it, and the expectations were great as the music which floated through the oak-carved screen of the gallery seemed divine. The right arm of each cavalier was placed round the waist of his lady, while her right hand rested in his left, and was pressed against his heart; in short, *la volta*, which had thus made its appearance in old Holyrood on the night of the 20th May, in the year of grace, 1537, was nothing more than the vault step, now known, in modern times, as the waltz.

There was a pause; the music again burst forth, rising and falling in regular time, and away went the dancers, round and round, in a succession of whirls, the little red-heeled and white velvet shoes of the ladies seeming to chase the buff boots and gold spurs of the gentlemen; round and round they went, rapidly, lightly, and gracefully. The tall Spanish ambassador, and little Madame de Montreuil acquitted themselves to perfection; but Roland and Jane, to whom he had only given a few lessons during the preceding forenoon, perhaps

less so; but none there observed it, and a burst of acclamation welcomed this graceful dance, which was now for the first time seen in Scotland, but which the prejudices of after years abolished till the beginning of the present century.

"What thinkest thou of this new spring, father abbot?" said Redhall, with a cold smile in his keen eyes.

"There is sorcery in it, by my faith there is!" whispered the abbot, lowering his voice and his bushy eyebrows; "there is sorcery in it, my lord advocate, or my name is not Robin Reid, abbot of Kinloss."

"Ha! dost thou think so?"

"Think so? Ken ye not that it hath been partly condemned by the parliament of Paris (whom we take for our model in all matters of justiciary), for it originated in Italy, from whence it was taken into France by the witches, who dance it with the devil on the sabbath. Ah, 'tis well worth making a memorandum of," continued this meagre little senator, perceiving that Redhall was writing something in his note-book or tablets, behind the shadow of a window-curtain.

"But the Spaniard is a knight of a religious order," urged Redhall, pausing.

"A religious order!" repeated the testy abbot; "'tis such a cloister of religieux as our knights of Torphichen, who spend night and day in drinking and dicing, fighting anent their prerogatives, and debauching the country maidens on their fiefs and baronies. Were he not ambassador of Charles V., I would vote for having him under the nippers of Nichol Birrel; for if ever a sorcerer trod on Scottish ground, 'tis he. He dabbles in charms and philtres, and every night 'tis said his chimney in St. John's Close emitteth blue sparks, which are

those of hell, as sure as I am Robin Reid, abbot of Kinloss. He and father St. Bernard are ever searching among the baser minerals for the spirit of the gold; at least so say the prebendaries of St. Giles."

"Um! he is confessor of the Lady Ashkirk," muttered Redhall, making another memorandum.

"As we were talking of sorcery, what hath the high sheriff of Lothian done with your vassal, the forester of Kinleith, who buried a living cat under his hearthstone, as a charm against evil?"

"Ah," said Redhall, with a smile, "Birrel soon found such proofs against him, that he is sent to the justiciary court."

"Ho! ho!" said the little abbot, rubbing his hands; "Sanders Screw and his concurrents will bring mickle to light, or my name is not Robin.—"

But here the advocate hurried abruptly away, for at that moment the dance ended; and flushed, heated, and fatigued, the two ladies were led away—De Montreuil, by her cavalier, into the adjoining apartment, and lady Jane towards a staircase which descended from the hall to the level and grassy lawn, that lay between the palace and the foot of the craigs of Salisbury.

The green sides of the silent hills and rocky brows of those basaltic cliffs, which seem but the half of some vast mountain which volcanic throes have rent and torn asunder, were bathed in the splendour of the broad and cloudless moon; the palace towers and vanes stood forth in strong white light, while the curtain walls and cloistered courts were steeped in sable shadow. On the right were a cluster of small antique houses where some of the royal retainers dwelt, and where Roland had his temporary domicile. This was called St. Anne's Yard; on the left, apparently among the hills, two red lights

were shining. One was from an ancient mansion at the foot of Salisbury craigs, where Robert, abbot of the Holy Cross, dwelt; the other was from the illuminated shrine of St. Antony's Hermitage.

Several revellers were lounging on the green sward in the moonlight, or sitting on the carved stone benches that were placed against the palace wall, and the lovers took possession of the most remote, where the south garden of the king bordered the burial-ground of the abbey.

"Jane," said Roland, as he gazed fondly on her pure brow and snowy skin, which seemed so dazzlingly white in the clear moonlight; "your smiles to-night have done more to raise the Douglas cause, than twenty thousand lances. How my heart leaps! I seem to tread on air! I knew well that James had but to see you, to appreciate your worth and beauty. He has done so; and now old dame Margaret of Arran, and all the Hamiltons of Cadyow and Clydesdale, will be ready to burst their boddices and die of sheer vexation."

"But if Archibald should be discovered——"

"Chut! dost think that James would dance with the sister over night and decapitate the brother in the morning?"

"The king never once referred to the frightful position in which he is placed."

"He is much too courtly to do so. But say, art thou not happy, dearest?"

"Happy? with a proclamation on this palace gate offering a thousand merks for my brother's head! Oh Roland, Roland! I would justly merit contempt to be so. I came not hither to rejoice, or with any other intention than to beg his life and pardon from the king. The figures of a dance were certainly not the place to

prefer such a solemn request—Mother of God ! no ; and as my mother says, but with a different meaning, I am yet byding my time. My heart sickens at the splendour of that glittering hall, when I bethink me that the gallant earl, my brother, whose plume should have waved among the loftiest there, is now the companion of lacqueys and liverymen—the retainers of our actual enemies and oppressors—the butt, perhaps, of their coarse mirth and ribald jests, and fearing to repel them with the spirit he possesses, lest he should be discovered and unmasked by those whose innate hatred of the Seton and the Douglas require not the additional incentive of king James's gold."

"It was, I own, a madcap adventure his coming here to-night ; but thou knowest that he is headstrong as a Highland bull. However, Lintstock, my servant, a wary old gunner of king James IV., is with him, and will see he is neither insulted nor discovered."

"Anything is better than suspense," said Jane, sobbing. "Would that the king were here."

"I will bring him if you wish it," said Roland, rising and taking both her hands in his ; "he would come in a moment, for to him a lady message is paramount to one from the parliament. But would you say that the earl is in Scotland—here among us in Edinburgh?"

"I would, Roland—yes, for such is my confidence in the honour and generosity of the king."

"'Tis not misplaced, for James is alike good and merciful; but 'twere better to ask his French bride, whom he loves too well to refuse her anything—even to become the ally of his uncle, English Henry ; and certes! the pardon of a gallant Scottish noble is no great boon to crave of a generous Scottish king."

Roland started, for at that moment the voice of

James was heard at one of the open windows of the hall just above them.

"Vipont ! Sir Roland Vipont !" he said.

"I am here, at your grace's service," replied Sir Roland, raising his bonnet.

"Wilt thou favour us a moment ? here, my lord the bishop of Limoges and I have a dispute as to whether our old gun of Galloway, Mollance Meg, or the Devil of Bois le Duc, carry the largest ball. I say Meg ; the bishop says the Devil ; and as 'tis thy office to know all points of gunner-craft, come hither, if that fair dame will do us the honour to spare thee for one moment, for we have laid a hundred lions Scots on the matter."

Loth to leave Jane, and anxious to please the king, Roland hesitated, till she said—

"Obey the king, and I will wait your return ; luckily, yonder is my cousin Sybil and Louis Leslie of the king's guard."

Roland pressed her hand, sprang up the flight of steps, and the moment he was gone Lady Jane found some one standing at her side.

She turned, and encountered the sombre figure of Redhall, the sad glance of whose piercing eyes ran like lightning through her veins ; and she trembled at the double reflection that she was almost alone, and that he might have overheard their dangerous conversation concerning her brother.

CHAPTER X.

LOVE AND ABHORRENCE.

“ Ah! who can e’er forget so fair a being?
Who can forget her half retiring sweets?
God! she is like a milk-white lamb that bleats
For man’s protection.”

WHEN Jane thought for a moment of how long this great political inquisitor and public prosecutor had been the feudal foe and legal oppressor of her mother’s kinsman and her father’s house, and that he had but recently (as she had gathered from her brother) meditated or attempted the assassination of her lover,—as he had previously done the chief of the Maclellans,—she felt her whole heart recoil from him as from a serpent, with terror and abhorrence. Nevertheless, finding that Sybil and her cavalier had disappeared among the groups of revelers who dotted the moonlit lawn, she had sufficient tact to veil her inward repugnance and suspicions under an outward politeness, and to incline her head slightly when he bowed and assumed a position for conversing by leaning his handsome and stately figure against the stone arm of the sofa, which was formed of a wyvern, with its wings outspread.

He was dazzled by the splendour of her beauty, which the unwonted magnificence of her attire had so

much enhanced; and remained silent and embarrassed, till Jane said—

“I did not imagine that so grave a man as Sir Adam Otterburn would have much to amuse him among these gay frivolities.”

“Nor have I, madam, for my mind is usually filled with thoughts of deeper and more vital import than the comely fashion of a ruff or mantle, or the curling of a pretty ringlet. I came but to steal a few moments from my unhappy destiny; and I swear by my faith, that to see you dancing with the king was the only tranquil joy I have had for many a day. Ah! madame, you excelled yourself; you outshone them all, as yonder moon outshines the stars around it!”

Lady Jane bowed again, and glanced uneasily at the staircase; there was no appearance of Roland, and knowing intuitively the dangerous topic to which the speaker was inclining, she trembled for what he might say next, for Redhall was not a man to dally much when he had any end in view.

He had seen her dancing with Roland Vipont; he had heard those whispers by which the whole court linked their names together as lovers, yet an uncontrollable folly or fatality led him blindly on.

“Notwithstanding that we were such good friends when last we met,” said he, in his soft and flute-like voice, while bending his fine dark eyes on the green sward, “you have shunned me so much of late, lady Jane, that I have had no opportunity of begging your permission to renew that conversation in which I presumed first to say—that—that——”

“What?——”

“That I loved you”—his voice sank to a whisper at the abruptness of the declaration.

"Oh! Sir Adam; thou followest a phantom."

Redhall sighed sadly and bitterly.

"There was a time, dearest madam, when I did not think so," he continued slowly and earnestly—"a time when I almost flattered myself that you loved me in return."

"I!" said Jane, faintly.

"*Thou*," he replied, impressively, fixing upon her his piercing eyes with an expression which fascinated her. "It was in the garden of my lord the abbot of Holyrood, at his mansion near yonder craigs, some nine or ten months ago, about the vesper time; it was a glorious evening, and a broad yellow harvest moon was shining in the blue heavens among golden-coloured clouds; the air was pure, and laden with perfume and with the fragrance of yonder orchards, and these fields covered with the grain of a ripe harvest. Abbot Robert had given a supper to Henrico Godscallo, the ambassador who came to offer as a bride Mary of Austria or Mary of Portugal to king James. Oh! thou canst not have forgotten it. We walked together in the garden, and you did me the honour to lean upon my arm. I bent my head towards you, and your beautiful hair touched my forehead. My heart beat like lightning—every vein trembled! Oh! I have never forgotten that night—that hour—the place—the time! You seemed good and kind, merry and gentle with me. I was on the point of declaring myself then—of saying how I loved you—how I worshipped you; and your charming embarrassment seemed to expect the avowal; when the countess's page—yonder black devil with the rings in his ears—approached, and the spell was broken. My God! the same moment, the same soft influences and adorable opportunity have never come again!"

"My lord advocate, you can plead ably for yourself," replied Jane, coldly.

"My soul is in the cause at issue," said he, looking at her anxiously; "'tis very true, I am very miserable. I am as one in a dream. I love the air she breathes—the ground she treads on." He was speaking to himself. In the very depth of his thoughts he forgot that she was beside him.

"My lord, my lord, 'tis the rhapsody this of Sir David Lindesay, or some such balladeer."

"Nay, nay; oh! do not mock me. It seemeth as if my love for you is not the common love of this cold and utilitarian world; for if ten ages rolled over our heads, I feel sure that my love would be the same; nor time, nor circumstance, not even despair, can overcome it. Oh! lady, believe me, there is no other man loves thee as I do."

Jane thought of Roland, but either the fury or the profundity of the speaker's passion awed her into silence, for she made no reply; and thereby encouraged, he continued—

"Pride and ambition are strong within me; but believe me, my breast never had a passion so deep, so pure, as my love for thee. There is a silent strength in it that grows out of its very hopelessness. Canst thou conceive this? Every glance, and smile, and word of thine, I have treasured up for years, and in solitude I gloat over them even as a miser would over his gold and silver."

Covered with confusion, and trembling excessively, Jane made an effort to withdraw.

"Beautiful tyrant!" said he, haughtily and firmly, as he stepped before her, "thou knowest thy power, and findest a cruel pleasure in its exercise; thy lips are full

of pride as thine eyes are full of light, and with the very smile of a goddess thou repayest the homage of all but me. Yet with all these charms I can conceive that no passion can dwell within thee, for thou art cold and impassible as the marble of that fountain which sparkles in the moonlight—vain as vanity herself, and selfish as Circé. While weaving thy spells thou thinkest not of me, or the fatal power of thy beauty which is destroying me.”

“Holy Mary!” said Jane, in terror at his growing excitement; “did I tell thee to love me? Am I to blame for this unruly frenzy?”

“Oh! my passion is very deep,” he continued, clasping his hands, and fixing his dark eyes on the stars. “My God! my God! It besets me—it transfixes and transforms me into the object I love—our existence seems the same.”

“What!” cried Jane, laughing; “hast thou transformed thyself into me?”

Redhall did not anticipate having his high-sounding sophistry so acutely criticized; he started as if a viper was beside him, and fixing upon her his eyes, which were fired with a strange mixture of sternness and ardour, he said, in his slow calm voice—

“Strong and serene in thy boasted purity and pride, thou laughest at me; and by that laugh,” he continued, in a hoarse and bitter voice, “I know that all is over with me; but beware thee, proud woman—for love and illusion may die fast together.”

“Sir Adam Otterburn,” replied Jane, haughtily, attempting again to retire, “for the last time I tell thee, that death were a thousand times preferable to thy love! Art thou not the sworn foe of my brother?”

“But not *thine*,” replied the advocate, with a lower-

ing brow; "make me not *that*, I pray thee." His heart glowed alternately with love and fury at her unmoved aspect. His self-importance was wounded by her apathy; and his galled pride was fast kindling a sentiment of hatred in his heart—a hate that grew side by side with his love—if such a state of heart can be conceived. "Thy brother's enemy?" he repeated, with a bitter laugh; "if I were indeed so much his enemy, I might astonish the Lord Arran and his Hamiltons to-night."

"My God!" thought Jane, as her heart sank within her; "he has overheard us, and learned our terrible secret!"

Alarmed by the ghastly expression of his face, which was white as marble, all save the jetty mustachios and the eyebrows that met over his finely-formed nose, Jane glanced anxiously towards the stair which ascended to the hall, and Sir Adam observed it. A smile curled his pale lips, but the fire of the most ferocious jealousy kindled in his dark and deep-set eyes.

"I know for whom thou art looking," said he, grasping her by the arm; "for yonder brainless fop, who thinks of nothing but his ruff and his plume and the glory of being master of the king's ordnance—a wretched worm, whom the heat of our Scottish wars hath nourished into a gilded butterfly, and who dares to cock his bonnet in our faces with the bearing of a landed baron."

"Gramercy!" said Jane, waggishly; "I knew not that a butterfly wore a bonnet."

"Hah!" he muttered, fiercely; "the lover who is once laughed at *is lost*!"

The grasp of his strong hand compressed her slender arm like a vice; there was an oath trembling on his

lips, and fury flashing in his eye, for love and hatred, as they struggled in his heart, made him both selfish and savage.

"Oh Mother of Mercy!" murmured Jane; "away, ruffian! or I will shriek that thou art a vampire!"

At that moment the shadow of a tall figure, armed with a prodigious sword, was thrown by the moon along the velvet sward; and Redhall was prostrated by a blow on the ear, dealt by a ponderous and unsparing hand. Jane turned with terror, and saw her brother, the earl, spring back and disappear under the cloister arches of the abbey; while, at the same moment, Roland Vipont leaped down stairs from the hall, taking four steps at once.

"A thousand pardons, dearest Jane, and a thousand more," he exclaimed, drawing her arm through his, and leading her away; "but this tiresome argument concerning old Mollance Meg and the Devil of Bois le Duc (plague take them both!) occupied more time than I had the least idea of; and my lord the bishop of Limoges hath lost on the matter a hundred silver livres, which the king means to give the Franciscans to-morrow. But thou art not angry with me?"

"Angry? oh, no! I know thou art sufficiently punished, minutes being ages when absent from me."

"Ah, thou art right, for my sojourn in Paris was a very eternity."

"Then let us join the dancers, and be merry while we may," said she, with a gaiety which was scarcely assumed, for she was but too happy to hurry him into the hall, without observing the lord advocate, who, stunned by the effects of the blow, lay for a second or two unseen, and somewhat ignominiously, upon a parterre of rose bushes, from whence he arose with fury in his heart,

and his sword in his hand, but to find himself alone—a fortunate circumstance, as he would infallibly have slain the first man near him. He adjusted his ruff and doublet, brushed a speck or two from his trunk breeches, and shaking his clenched hand, said hoarsely, under his mustachios—

“Either Roland Vipont or the earl of Ashkirk dishonoured me by that blow. Be it so—I have them all in my grasp! Revenge is a joy for gods and demons, and, by the Holy Rood, I will be avenged, and fearfully, too!”

By this time the ball was nearly over, for the good people of those days had not yet conceived the idea of turning day into night; and as the king and court were to depart on a grand hawking expedition on the morrow, and, as usual, had to be all up with the lark and the eagle, the bell-clock of the neighbouring abbey church had barely tolled twelve when the dancing concluded, and the guests began to retire in rapid succession, each paying their adieux to the king and queen as they departed, and paying them with a solemnity and parade such as one may see nowhere now save in Old Castile.

“Take courage, my sweet flower, Jane, for now is your most fortunate time to prefer to Magdalene ‘your request that Ashkirk may be pardoned. She will never, by refusal, send away her principal guest ungraciously,’” said Roland as, hurrying through the festooned arras from the refreshment-room, where they had been tarrying for a time, they joined the stream of departing revellers who promenaded round the hall, and approached their royal host and hostess somewhat like a glittering procession. James and Magdalene were standing at the head of the hall, just as when the entertainment began. His bonnet was in his right hand, his left rested on his

sword, and was hidden by his short mantle; the queen leant on his arm, and he bowed low to each of the nobles, and lower still to their brocaded ladies. The Scottish and French ladies of honour were grouped a little behind, all beautiful, young, nobly born, and brilliantly attired.

"If she procures me this boon," said Jane, "I will say nine prayers for her at the altar of St. Magdalene to-morrow, when we go to St. Giles. Of course you go with us to hear father St. Bernard's oration on the patron saint of the city?"

"Wherever you go I shall go; but the hour?"

"One o'clock; but you will come at noon and see me?"

"Plague on it, I have a meeting."

"A meeting?" said Jane, anxiously.

"Oh, a duty, dearest—an indispensable duty to perform," said Roland, remembering his brief challenge to Kincavil.

"What duty is this, of which I hear now for the first time?"

"To see those fifty-six pieces of cannon which king Francis hath sent to king James; they are to be landed from Sir Robert Barton's ships, and conveyed to the Gun-house to-morrow. A most important duty, Jane; they are all beautiful brass culverins, royal and demi; 'twould do your heart good to see them!"

"Ah, if James and the queen should refuse me this!—we are close to them now."

"Refuse you? they will refuse nothing that is asked in a voice so soft and so gentle."

As they drew near the royal group, Jane felt her heart almost failing her; she clung to Roland's arm, and watched the expression in the face of Magdalene. She seemed now very pale; her eyes were humid and

downcast; gentleness and languor pervaded her beautiful features; she was overcome with lassitude and sinking with fatigue—the weakness incident to that hereditary disease which fast and surely was preying upon her fragile form. The proud nobles, to whom the king spoke occasionally as he bade them adieu, received his courtly attentions as a tribute due to their patriotic and lofty ancestry, and their proud bearing seemed to say, plainly, “I am George Earl of Errol, Constable of Scotland,” or “I am William Earl of Montrose, and come of that Græme whom king David knighted when the Stuarts were but thanes of Kyle and Strathgryfe;” for it was an age when the king was only a great baron, and every baron or laird was a king and a kaiser to boot.

As they approached, Roland could perceive that cold glances welcomed Jane Seton from the ladies of honour, who were all enemies of her house, and whose fathers and brothers enjoyed many fiefs of the Douglas lands and fortresses, defacing the *crowned heart* on their battlements and substituting the three *cinque-foils* of Hamilton; but to crown all, and increase the poor girl’s perturbation, she perceived Redhall standing near the king, seeming, with his dark figure and pallid visage, like her evil genius, cold, impassible, and dignified as if the startling episode we have just related had never taken place.

“*Ah, ma bonne !*” they heard Magdalene say to Mademoiselle de Brissac, “how tired I am, and excessively sick of all this parade !”

“Now, be of good heart, my sweet Jane,” said Roland, pressing her arm, “and prefer your request firmly; for Madame de Montreuil has explained to the queen all that we wish.”

When she drew near the beautiful young girl that leaned on James's arm, instead of bowing and passing on, Jane sunk on one knee, and said—

“I beseech your grace to crave my brother's pardon from our sovereign lord.”

“I know that he cannot refuse me anything,” said the young queen, with girlish simplicity, as she looked up lovingly and trustingly in the king's face, while stretching out her hand to Jane. The latter pressed to her beautiful lips that fair little hand which was dimpled like that of a child, and the king was about to speak (and benignly, too, for every feature of his fine face said so), when Magdalene, overcome by her recent illness, by the close atmosphere of the hall, which was perfumed to excess, and by the glitter of innumerable wax-lights, uttered a faint cry, and fell backwards into the arms of *Mademoiselle de Brissac*.

Consternation and concern were visible in every face ; the queen was borne away senseless, and James hastily followed her almost inanimate figure ; the crowd behind pressed on, and Roland and Jane were carried before it. Redhall smiled, and said to the abbot of Kinloss, in James's hearing—

“Did I not tell you, my lord, how rash it was to have the Lady Seton here?”

“*Agnus Dei* ! yea, verily, for her mother deals in salves and philtres ; and there was sorcery at work just now, Sir Adam, or my name is not Robin Reid.”

These words made a deep impression on the few who were meant to hear them, but chiefly on the king, who darted an angry glance after Jane Seton, and turned on his heel.

At the palace gate the discomfited pair met Marion Logan, Alison Hume, and Sybil Douglas, who were all

muffled in their hoods and mantles, and surrounded by an escort of serving-men, armed with steel caps and bucklers, swords, and wheel-lock dagues, and who bore lighted links. A few cavaliers with whom they had danced (Roland among them, of course) accompanied them, and in this order they hurried home on foot, for wheeled vehicles were as yet unknown in the kingdom.

Terrified by the practical jokes of the king's jester, and the din of his bladder and bells, Sabrino had long since fled the precincts of the court, and taken refuge in his usual sleeping place (a small alcove near the door of the countess's apartment), which he shared in common with a large black staghound.

"Come early to-morrow, dear Roland, and we will talk over the adventures of the last few hours," whispered Jane, as she bade adieu to her lover; "alas! father St. Bernard warned me against going to-night; but I have gone, and what has been the result?"

CHAPTER XI.

SWORDBLADES AND SALVE.

“Quhen Marche with variand windis wes past,
And Appryll had with her silver shouris
Tane leif of Nature with an orient blast;
And lusty May, that mother is of flouris,
Had maid the birdis to begyn their houris,
Amang the tender odouris red and quhyt,
Quhais harmony to heir it was delyt.”

DUNBAR's *Thrissal and the Rois*, 1503.

THE next morning was bright and beautiful; the birds sang merrily in the old orchards of the palace and the older oak trees of the abbey Sancte Crucis. The sunlight, as it poured over the dark Craigs of Salisbury, and through chasms and fissures in their rocks, shone upon the green valleys below like a golden haze, and tipped with yellow light the grey masses of the strong old city. The fresh grass and the open flowers loaded the soft west wind with perfume, and gladdened the hearts of the happy hawking party, which left the palace an hour after sunrise, and all gaily mounted, with bugles sounding, horses prancing, plumes waving, and accompanied by a dozen of falconers in the royal livery, running on foot, with perches of hawks slung on their shoulders.

As they rode eastward, by the base of Arthur's Seat, and past the green and mossy bank where, among the

clambering wild roses, stood the little pillared well, dedicated in the old time "to the good Saint Margaret, queen of Scotland, and mother of the poor," and pursued thence their merry route towards the Loch of Restalrig, which lay among its rocks and sedges, like a lake of blue and gold, Roland was compelled, by the cold manner of the king, to retire from his side. He saw with pain that the clear and benevolent eye of the monarch was clouded—that anger, unmistakeable anger, lowered upon his open brow. The inquiries of Roland for the health of the queen were received so haughtily, and replied to so briefly, that, with a heart full of wrath and pride, before the first heron had been raised from among the rushes and water-lilies to do battle in the air, he turned abruptly away, and resigned his place to Sir Adam Otterburn of Redhall, whose face was lighted with an indescribable smile, as he pressed forward to the side of the young king.

The bells of the Carmelites, on the north side of the city, of the Dominicans on the south, of the Franciscans in the Grassmarket, and other large establishments, were all ringing for morning mass, when the cavalcade returned; and Roland, sick at heart and dispirited, without bidding adieu to the king, (who with his company passed on to prayer in the abbey church), dismounted at the door of his own lodgings, and, throwing the bridle of his horse to his servant, demanded breakfast, for he was in too furious a mood to attend mass. He was anxious to see Lord Ashkirk, but, encouraged by his disguise, and trusting implicitly in the old domestics of the house, that rash noble had gone to visit his family.

Breakfast was prepared and laid on the table by Roland's servant, Linton Stock, whose name had been

professionally shortened into Lintstock. He was an old, iron-visaged culvernier, of king James IV.'s days (as the countess would say), hard-featured, wiry-haired, weather-beaten, and empurpled with hard drinking. It was his constant boast that he had levelled one of Borthwick's Brass Sisters on the field of Flodden, and Thrawn Mow at the siege of Tantallan. Like Hannibal, this veteran had only one eye, for Mow (a famous cannon of Scottish antiquity) lost a piece of her muzzle every time she was discharged; and one of the said pieces deprived Lintstock of his dexter eye, which, as he said, ever after saved him the trouble of closing it when taking aim, or adjusting the quoins under the breech of a culverin. For wages he had all his master's cast cloaks, doublets, and breeches; and being borne on the muster-roll of the king's gunners, his pay, which was somewhere about three-halfpence Scots per diem, made him independent of all mankind.

On the anniversary of a Scottish victory, this one-eyed patriot invariably got himself uproariously drunk, and broke the windows of the English ambassador; on the anniversary of any of our defeats he was invariably ditto from vexation: and as these alternate sources of joy and grief occurred pretty often, the ancient warrior was seldom long sober.

Neither Roland's anger at the king, nor his intended combat with Kincavil, prevented him from making an excellent breakfast on broiled fish, cold meat, and bright brown ale. Before sitting down he selected the strongest and longest of some half-dozen swords that hung in a corner. It was a large double-edged weapon, with an ample hilt of steel; the blade, being inlaid, was one of those called damasquinee, from the Asiatic art just then introduced into Europe by the famous Benvenuto Cellini. It was a beautiful rapier, which he had taken in battle

from an Italian cavalier, when serving under John Stuart Duke of Albany, when, at the head of ten thousand French men-at-arms, that gallant prince invaded the kingdom of Naples. Roland never used it save on important and desperate occasions, and remembering that Kincavil was an able swordsman, he took it down and handed it to Lintstock to polish; a duty which he performed in silent precision, with the aid of an old buff belt. Thereafter, with true military coolness, he tore a shirt into bandages, and prepared some lint against his master's return.

"How many pots hast thou of that rubbish Lady Ashkirk sent me?—the salve, I mean," asked Roland, with his moustaches whitened over by ale froth.

"Three, sir."

"Dost thou know the laird of Kincavil's lodging?"

"Aboon the Tron—yes."

"Then leave the pots there to-day, with my best commendations; for, by my faith, he will need them all."

Lintstock continued to rub, and watched the polish of the blade with his eye sideways, as a bird does its seed.

"Thou knowest I expect two friends to supper, and must trust to thy ingenuity, for, 'fore God! I have not a testoon in the world."

"Be easy, Sir Roland, I'll provide supper for the king himself, if he come, and plenty Bordeaux to boot, forbye and attour the Rochelle," replied Lintstock, with a nod and a knowing wink of his solitary eye.

The moment breakfast was over, Roland crossed himself and wiped his moustaches. Receiving his sword, he placed it in his belt on the left side, hung a long armpit dagger on the right, stuck his bonnet rather over the right eye, clasped his doublet carefully to the throat,

and giving his curls a last adjust, for he was somewhat of a beau, whistled the "March to Harlaw," as he issued forth, with the fullest intention of perforating the laird of Kincavil like a pepperbox.

He passed the long and irregular façade of the palace, the strongly-grated windows of which were glittering in the bright sunshine that bathed the varied architecture of its courts and towers. Clad in their red doublets slashed with black, and wearing caps and gorgets of steel, the sentinels of the king's guard were leaning on their heavy arquebuses, the rests or forks of which were slung in their sword-belts; and they stood in the bright blaze of the sun, as listlessly and still as the banner of the red lion that waved above the gate. Beyond the precincts of the palace, the street, which is overlooked by gable-ended houses, in the old Flemish taste, becomes much wider. He turned to the right, and passed through the Watergate, the most eastern barrier of Edinburgh. This strong and venerable porte obtained its name because the king's horses were led out that way every morning to water, in a large pond near it. On quitting this ivied and grass-tufted archway, Roland found the open space allotted for tennis-players lying on his right hand, the horse-pond lay on his left, and before him the verdant Calton reared up its lonely ridge.

The whole place was then quite solitary enough for such a meeting, though now the site of the pond, the tennis court, and even the hill itself are covered with houses.

Roland's anger was somewhat increased by perceiving that his adversary was already on the ground, and wiling away the time by skimming flat stones across the pond.

"Ah! thou villanous Hamilton," thought he, "how I long to be at thee! My sword is like a razor, my

wrist is like steel, this morning, and I will curry thee in such fashion, that thou shalt tremble at the name of Jane Seton or a salve-pot ever after."

"God be with you, Sir Roland; you have not kept me waiting long," said Kincavil, bowing with cold politeness.

"I am glad of it."

"You have been at mass this morning with the king, I think?"

"No, faith!" said Roland, knitting his brows as he thought of the hawking party. "I feared there would be no room for me among so many Hamiltons, panders, and parasites."

"Then I hope you said prayers at home," replied Kincavil, whose eyes flashed, as he unsheathed his sword.

"As usual; but I forgot to bring for your use a pot of that notable salve of which you made a jest last night."

"Keep it for yourself, sir Roland—guard."

"Come on, then—you *will* have it."

They saluted each other, the bright blades clashed, and they both engaged with great address and skill. Clad in blue velvet and gold, Kincavil was both strong and handsome; but as a swordsman, considerably inferior to Roland, who had studied his thrusts at the court of Francis I.; and thus, three passes had scarcely been exchanged on the right, when he made a sudden *appel* on the left, and quickly disengaging to the right again, passed his sword completely through the body of his adversary, who bent forward over it, and sank upon his knees. He made a futile effort to rise, but the moment Roland's blade was withdrawn, sank prostrate on the grass, with the blood gushing from his wound.

"Ask me not to beg my life, Sir Roland," said Hamilton in a broken voice, "for I will rather die than condescend so far."

"Thou art a gallant man, Sir John Hamilton; and may the devil take me if I make any such request; but methinks I have taught you the danger of jesting with the names of noble ladies."

"My Heaven! yes. I am bleeding fast; and yet, if the Lady Ashkirk doth really make that precious salve," said Kincavil, with true Scottish obstinacy, "tell her for God's love to send me a pot thereof, for I am enduring the torments of hell!" and he reclined against a stone, pale and motionless, with his beautiful doublet of blue velvet drenched in blood.

Roland carefully wiped and sheathed his favourite Italian sword with the air of a man who was used to such encounters; and after vainly endeavouring to stanch the crimson torrent, he hastened to the Watergate, from whence he sent the under-warders to look after the wounded man, and then walked up the street towards the house of the countess, as if nothing had happened.

A thrust or so through the body was a mere nothing in those days.

CHAPTER XII.

EDINBURGH IN 1537.

"Installed on hills, her head near starry bowers,
Edina shines amid protecting powers;
Religious temples guard her on the east,
And Mar's strong towers defend her on the west;
For sceptres nowhere stands a town more fit,
Nor where a queen of all the world might sit;
Be this thy praise, above all be most brave,
No man did e'er defame thee but *a slave*."

ARTHUR JOHNSTONE, 1630.

THE countess Margaret was attired in her great capuchon of James the Fourth's days; it was turned back above the apex of her stupendous coif, and flowed over her shoulders. Her lofty figure and towering head-dress completely dwarfed Jane and her companions, whose triangular velvet hoods were of a less imposing form. The whole family and household were about to set forth for St. Giles, and Roland met the procession in the archway. The old lady was looking unusually grave, for that morning she had put on her stockings with the wrong side outwards—an infallible omen of misfortune. We have said the whole household, for in addition to several female attendants and the black page, there were Gilzean Seton, the countess's esquire, or seneschal, and six or eight tall fellows in steel bonnets and corslets, armed with Jedwood axes and wheel-lock pistols—a new

weapon, which had just then been introduced from Italy, and was esteemed one of the wonders of mechanism. These were all of iron, butted like the pommel of a poniard, and were fired by the rapid revolution of a wheel against a piece of sulphuret of iron, which was secured like the flint of a modern musket, but had the cock on that side where of late we have seen the pan.

Gilzean and his companions were all clad in the countess's livery, (rather worn-looking certainly) but all having on their sleeves the coronet and the green dragon of the Setons, spouting fire.

The earl, still disguised, and bearing his long sword, marched among them; but by their whispers and subdued manner in his presence, it was evident to Roland that the secret identity of his new valet was known to them all.

"Rash lord!" thought he; "if one of these should prove a traitor."

"I see reproach in your eye," said the earl, in a low tone, and with an acuteness that somewhat startled Roland. "But think you that my father's roof ever sheltered a slipper-helmet so pitiful, that he would betray his son? I trow not. Nay, nay, Sir Roland, the vassals of our house are all good men and true."

"And such my husband ever found them," said the countess, looking with a proud smile from her tall son to his stately followers; "for the fathers of mair than one of these my buirdly lads died by his bridle-rein under King James the Fourth, of gude and gallant memorie."

"Now, Sir Roland," said lady Jane, as she took his proffered arm, with a smile on her coral lip; "you come not by stealth to visit us to-day. The king and his displeasure—"

"May go to the ——"

"Fie! I hope thy debarcation of cannon is over, and that thou art free to bask in my smiles for the rest of the day?"

"It is over," replied Roland, avoiding the eye of the earl, who perceived a sword-thrust in his doublet, and a rent in his velvet mantle, where none had been visible the day before; "and to-morrow I am to show them all to the queen, and must, with my own hands, fire off the great gun Meg for her behoof. By Jove! I will carry off the cock from St. Anthony's spire at Leith!"

"And what of this dainty dame," said the countess, as they proceeded up the street; "hast heard how her health is this morning?"

"I have not; but if I am to judge from the unwonted reserve of the king, I should deem her poorly enough."

"His reserve?" said the earl, scornfully; "and thus he vents his petulance on a gallant knight, as he would upon his pimps of the house of Arran—those rascally Hamiltons," he added, with eyes flashing fire, "who, gorged to their full with the plunder of our kinsmen, are building unto themselves strengths from which even our valour can never drive them—castles and towers, to which the palaces of Lochmaben and Linlithgow are but huts and sheilings."

"Oh! hush, ye unwise bairn," said the countess; "hush, and take your place among the serving men, lest we be seen conversing, and so excite suspicion. Let us not talk harshly of this puir French stranger, whom, father St. Bernard tells me, hath a deadly disease, which preyeth upon her vitals, and will, ere long, bear her to the grave."

"Disease," exclaimed Jane and her companions, with surprise; "and what is this disease?"

"'Tis a catarrh, which descendeth daily into her stomach, and must, sooner or later, cause death, for it hath defied the most skilful physicians and apothegars of France and Italy. Yet, were she mine ain bairn, or had I the place o' that fushionless body, Madame de Montreuil, I would soon make her whole and well."

"How, how, Lady Ashkirk?" asked Sybil, and the others, who put great faith in the countess's skill as a leech; and really, at salving a slash from a sword, or stanching a thrust from a poniard, few in Edinburgh equalled her; and it was a time when she found plenty of patients.

"'Tis a great secret, and yet withal a simple one; for with it my mother, the Lady Jean Gordon, of Glenbucket (quhom God assoilzie), made a whole man of her sister's son, the abbot of Pluscardine, who hath now departed to the company of the saints. 'Tis the first egg that a pullet hath layed (and mark ye, damsels, it must be layed upon a Friday), beat up widdershins with the first dew of the morning, and with thirteen drops of holy water, for ye ken there is a charm in that number; and this simple, if taken as the first food for nine successive mornings, would cure her. Gif it failed, there is one other mode—by applying a stone called a *magnet*, of potent and miraculous power, to the pit of the stomach, and repeating the word *Abrodaetia* three times; whilk failing, we must trust to God, for then it can be no other than the demon *Archeus*, who, at times, takes possession of the stomach, as the learned Paracelsus told father St. Bernard, when he dwelt with him at the Scottish cloister of Wurtzburg, in the year 1528."

"Mother of God!" exclaimed all the girls, looking at each other with fear, for the countess's manner was so serious, and she quoted such imposing names, that

even Roland put his hand to his waist-belt, as if to assure himself that there was no such tenant as the said *Archeus* under it.

"I shall die with fear if ever I feel ill after this," said Sybil; "I shall be sure to think I am possessed of a demon. Wouldst thou not, cousin Archibald?"

"Mass!" replied the earl, "I would drown the demon in good wine, and if that failed, should exorcise him in warm usquebaugh."

Roland could not restrain a sensation of uneasiness during this conversation; for though deeply imbued with superstition, like every man at that time, and as a soldier believing a little in suits of charmed mail, that rendered the wearer invulnerable, he knew that the vulgar regarded the countess (like the lady of Buccleugh in the next age) with some terror for her abstruse knowledge; and at the present crisis he had no wish, certainly, that this suspicion should be increased.

The High-street, which had just been paved for the first time, was gay and crowded, for all the *élite* of the court and city, with their attendants, were thronging towards the church of St. Giles. All the balconies, erected for the queen's entrance, had been taken down; the banners were long since removed, but the garlands yet displayed their faded flowers around the various crosses which then encumbered the central street—though less so, certainly, than the innumerable outshots and projections, outside stairs, turnpike towers, round, square, and octagon; wooden balconies and stone arcades, which imparted an aspect so picturesque to the High-street and Canongate. The total absence of all manner of vehicles, or other obstruction (save watermen with their barrels, or a few equestrians) made the middle of the street—or, as it was popularly named,

"the crown of the causeway," the most convenient place for walking, as well as the most honourable. Thus the possession of it was frequently disputed at point of sword, for in those good old times, no man of equal rank would yield to another the breadth of a hair unless he was of the same *name*—for clanship was the great bond of brotherhood—the second religion of the Scottish people, by which the humblest in the land can yet count kindred with their nobles.

As a lady, there was little chance of the countess being obstructed, unless some noble dame of the opposite faction was descending with *her* train towards the palace; and now, as she had reached the more crowded thoroughfare, she took the arm of Sir Roland Vipont; her daughter, with the ladies Alison, Logan, and Sybil, followed; while the armed servants marched before and behind, with axes shouldered.

Crowds attired in velvet cloaks and plumed bonnets, satin hoods and silk mantles; Dominicans in black robes, and Carmelites in white; Hospitallers of St. Anthony, and Franciscans in grey, were seen pouring like a living flood into the various doors of St. Giles; and, though it was then apparently destitute of shops, the vast High-street seemed to glitter with gaudy dresses in the gay sunshine. The places where the merchants sold their wares were mere dens, to which stairs descended abruptly from the pavement; the goods were thus exposed for sale in those stone vaults which formed the superstructure of every Scottish edifice. All the principal markets were kept in other parts of the town, for, in the year of grace 1477, when the potent and valiant knight Sir James Crichton of Ruthven was lord provost of our good city, it had been ordained that hay and corn should be sold in the Cowgate, and salt in

Niddry's Wynd. That the craimes, or booths, for the retail of goods, should be ranged from the Bellhouse to the Tron; that wood and timber should be sold westward of the Grey Friary; the shoemakers' stalls stood between Forrester's Wynd and the dyke of Dalrymple's yard; and the nolt-market where also "partrickes, pluvars, capones, and conyngs" were sold, occupied Blackfriars Wynd; the cloth-merchants and bonnet-makers dwelt in the Upper Bow; while the dealers in all manner of irongraith, dagger, and bow-makers, damascars of swords, armourers, lorimers, and lock-makers, were domiciled under the shadow of that strong and stately barrier, the Netherbow.

There, immediately below the arcades of a tenement bearing the arms of the lord abbot of Kinloss, stood a shop, the small deep windows of which were secured by gratings, that were each like an iron harrow, built into the ponderous masonry. In the good town, we still build our walls three feet thick; but in the days of James V., they built them six, and even seven feet thick. A board over the door announced it to be the shop of *John Mossman, Jeweller, and Makkar of Silver-work to y^e King's Majestie*; and here the countess and her party tarried a moment to see the new crown of queen Magdalene, whose coronation was to take place in a month or so.

Master Mossman, a short and pursy, but well-fed burgess, clad in a cassocke-coat of Galloway cloth, was just in the act of giving the finishing touches to a silver maizer, or drinking-cup. He rose up with all his workmen and apprentices on the entrance of the countess, and welcomed her to his shop with studious politeness, though his chief patrons were the Hamiltons. His premises were vaulted with stone, and painted with various

ornamental designs between the glazed cupboards of oak, which contained chased and elaborate vessels of silver, sword and dagger-hilts, buckles, and falcon-bells of every pattern and device. A small statue of St. Eloi, the patron of his craft, occupied a Gothic niche above the fire-place, so that the silversmith might warm himself when saying his prayers in winter, which was a saving of time; and on each side thereof hung the steel bonnets, swords, and axes with which he and his men armed them for weekly duty, as municipal guards within the eight Portes of the city.

“Good Master Mossman,” said Roland, on seeing that the wealthy artificer looked somewhat uneasily at the jackmen, whose swords and axes made such a terrible clatter on his stone floor, “our lady the countess of Ashkirk would be favoured with a view of the queen’s new crown, that she may judge of thy handiwork, anent which we hear so much daily.”

The jeweller, who had feared that the countess (whose circumstances he knew were the reverse of flourishing,) had come to order a quantity of plate, breathed more freely, and bowed almost to his red garters; whereupon the countess curtsied, for he was known to be one of the richest burgesses and freeholders in Edinburgh, and his voice bore all before it at the council-board. From a round box, strongly bound with brass and lined with purple velvet, he drew forth the glittering diadem for the queen consort—the same crown which James VI. took to London in 1603, and which the government ought in honour to restore to the castle of Edinburgh. It is composed of pure gold from Crawfordmuir, and is enriched with many precious stones and curious embossings.

“It is a fair gaud,” said the countess, sighing; “but

my mind misgives me sorely that the puir bairn for whom it is intended may never live to wear it."

"Poor little queen!" said Jane, with moistened eyes, "if all be as thou sayest, her days are indeed numbered."

The silversmith seemed surprised, and his men raised their heads to listen; but the delight expressed by the ladies at the jewels and workmanship of this new addition to the regalia gratified the artificer, a smile spread over his jovial visage, and he gallantly held it over the head of lady Jane, saying—

"My fair lady, it would become thee as well as her for whom it is intended."

"By my soul, Master Mossman, thou hast more the air of a gallant than a mere worker of metals," said Vipont, pleased with the compliments of the silversmith, but, like every soldier, unable to conceal how lightly he valued the mere mechanic; "and I marvel much that thou didst not in thy youth renounce the hammer and pincers for the helmet and partisan, as being better suited to one who could so compliment a fair demoiselle."

"You wrong me, noble sir," said the silversmith, calmly; "I *have* borne arms in my youth——"

"Under our gude king James IV.?" interposed the countess.

"Yea, madame," replied the burgess, with a kindling eye; "three hundred of us marched to Flodden under the banner of provost Lauder; but few, unco few, ever again heard the ding o' the Tron-bell. But, as deacon of the honourable corporation of hammermen, I deem myself nowise inferior, Sir Roland, to what I was in my youth."

"Assuredly not, good Master Mossman," said the

countess, "for I have ever esteemed thee an honest and worthy citizen ; and we may remember how, at the last feast of St. Eloi, our good father St. Bernard illustrated the great honour which God hath bestowed on artizans in all ages."

"True, madame ; Tubal Cain was a cunning artificer in all manner of brass and iron-work ; Porus, king of the Indies, was the son of a shaver, and worked himself as a puir tinkler body and mender of kail-pots ; Agathocles, king of Sicily, was a potter and maker of crocks, cans, and milk-luggies ; Zeno of Constantia was a puir wabster, that clothed the naked from his ain loom ; and Artagorus, lord of Cyconia, was the son of a cook ; nor must we forget Joseph the carpenter, the spouse of the blessed Virgin, whilk, as my neighbour deacon Plane sayeth, will ever redound to the immortal honour of his craft, the wrichts."

Sir Roland, who did not expect such a volley of hard names to be opened upon him, had nothing more to urge, but bowed with a pleasant smile as they retired, leaving the king's jeweller master of the field.

At the same moment Nichol Birrel, who had been inquisitively peering through the grated window, hastened away and mingled with the crowd.

CHAPTER XIII.

SAINT GILES.

“ You might have heard a pebble fall,
A beetle hum, a cricket sing,
An owlet flap his boding wing,
On Giles's steeple tall.
The antique buildings climbing high,
Whose gothic frontlets sought the sky.”

Marmion, Canto V.

At the great entrance of St. Giles's church (a deep and lofty gothic doorway) the steps of which were yet stained with the gallant blood of M'Clellan of Bombie, among the gaily attired crowd that was pressing up the flight and into that magnificent fane, the countess, with her friends and followers, encountered Redhall, with *his* friend (Kinloss,) and his followers, Nichol Birrel, Dobbie, and Sanders Screw, whose official capacities did not prevent their appearance among his retinue, like whom, they wore steel bonnets, and were barbed to the teeth.

The king's advocate bowed profoundly, and, with all respect, fell back a pace or so, while the countess and her ladies swept into the church like a frigate followed by four cutters. A true gallant of the day, Roland dipped his hand into the font, and assisted Jane to holy water, scattering the rest over the poor people who knelt at the doorway, looking for alms in silence.

All the windows of this great edifice were then filled with stained glass; thus the prismatic hues of many a martyr's robe, many a blood-red cross, many a glorious halo and gaudy armorial blazon were thrown on the silent throng who crowded the choir, the nave, and the transepts of this majestic church. Now it is divided into three; then it was open, and unincumbered by galleries stood in all the pristine glory of its gothic architecture, two hundred feet in length by one hundred and twenty in breadth, the four arms of the vast cross being open under the stupendous central arches which sprung away aloft, upholding the square tower and mural crown of its spire. There stood the great altar, the splendid canopy of which uprose from columns of burnished brass. Underneath was the pix of gold, where the host was kept; above this stood a gigantic crucifix of silver, and the solid candlesticks of the same metal, which were of great size and weight. At the reformation, these and all other sacred utensils were seized by the provost, who ordered the brazen pillars to be cast into cannon for the ramparts of the city.

The pulpit was yet unoccupied; but round the four sides of the great altar were many persons kneeling in prayer. Five streams of brilliantly-coloured sunlight fell from the south aslant the great church, from the five vaulted chapels which Johne Skayer and Johne of Stone, two cunning masons, built during the provostry of that "good man and noble," the laird of Netherliberton. Then the church was without other seats than those cushions and stools which were borne by servants, or by cavaliers for the use of the ladies they accompanied. Many a group in velvet cloaks and high ruffs, with satin trains and hoods of crammasie; many a moustachioed and belted man, half noble and wholly soldier,

many a shaven friar, and many a sweet young girl with that fair hair so famed in Scottish song (the golden hair which Raphael loved so well), were kneeling before the lesser altars, of which that great temple, "our mother kirk of old St. Giles," boasted not less than forty.

The most magnificent were those of the Holy Blood, the Holy Cross de Lucano, Nostre Domine, St. Michael de Monte Tomba, Our Lady of Piety, and St. Eloi, the most eastern shrine, which belonged to the gallant craftsmen, as being that of their peculiar patron. Behind it they had placed a window, whereon were painted the elephant and crowned hammer of the principal corporation, and before it hung a beautiful lamp of silver, which was said to have been brought by them from the sack of Jerusalem, and the light of which was never extinguished. The most beautifully-decorated columns of the church are four, where this altar stood. Like the branches of a forest, the ribs of the groined roof sprung away aloft into the dusky clerestory, through the deep windows of which fell many a flake of light of every rainbow hue, revealing many a grotesque carving and many a grim old head.

"Many a scutcheon and banner riven"

decorated the side chapels, and many a sword and helmet were rusting above the tombs of departed valour. Many marble statues of saints and warriors, of mitred abbots and good old citizens, were standing there in niches, with their hands clasped in one eternal prayer; for there now lie the dead of more than seven hundred years, with the wise Moray, and Montrose the loyal; for many a proud peer and valiant warrior, the faithful and the false, the just and the unjust, the impious and the true, the beautiful and the deformed, all blent in one

common and undistinguishable dust, have mouldered beneath the pavement of its deep vaults and solemn aisles.

Bowing to the great altar, the countess, with all her train, passed down the church towards the north-east pillar, which is called *the king's*, as it bears the arms of James II., where she usually sat, for her husband, Earl John, lay near it, before the altar of St. John the Baptist. The servants arranged the kneeling cushions, and the countess received her velvet-bound missal from Sabrino, who sat down behind her, not on his knees, but *à la turque*, which made the people, who viewed the poor negro with fear and hostility, mutter among themselves.

"Gudesake! she bringeth her black devil into the very kirk wi' her?" said deacon Plane, under his thick beard, to his better half.

"I could have sworn upon the gospels, gudeman, that the holy water hissed when she dipped her hand in the font."

"Her finger, ye mean, neibour," said another, behind his bonnet; "think ye a wizard-body would dip in mair than they could help?"

"Wheesht, Elsie—Losh keep us, the thing is looking at ye!"

"Weel, I carena a bodle—let it look!" replied the woman confidently, while feeling for a blessed relique of St. Roque, which she carried in her bosom; but Sabrino grinned, and showed all his white teeth, and, what was still more appalling, an almost total absence of tongue—the poor being was a mute, or nearly so—upon which the woman shrunk close to her husband, and began to cross herself with great energy; while at the same moment the provost of St. Giles and the sixteen prebendaries, preceded by their curate and crossbearer, the

sacristan ringing a bell, the beadle, the minister of the choir bearing a standard, four choristers, and eight tapers, passed through the church, in procession, to their stalls within the sanctuary, softly and noiselessly, while all the vast congregation knelt, and when again they rose, Father St. Bernard was in the pulpit, which projected from one of the four great columns sustaining the spire.

He was a mild and benevolent-looking old priest, whom all the citizens loved for his piety, goodness, and attention to the sick and poor during the frightful pestilence of 1520. His hair was white as snow, his grey eyes were bright and gentle. Father St. Bernard was now in his sixtieth year; and, when accompanying the Scottish army as a confessor, had seen the battles of Sauchie, of Flodden, and Linlithgow.

On this day he had elaborately decorated and lighted the shrine of St. Giles, and his statue, the same which the reformers threw into the North Loch, was encircled by a wreath of roses, made by Jane Seton and her companions; around it was hung a piece of red cloth, then known as "Sanct Geiles' coat," and before it, in a casket of chased silver, lay his skeleton arm—a relique which the Knight of Gourtoun had received from Louis XI. of France, and bequeathed to the church.

Oblivious of the oration he had come to hear, of the magnificent manner in which the church was decorated, and of the attentive crowds that filled it, Redhall leaned against a column not far from the king's, and watched attentively the group which knelt beside the countess. When Father St. Bernard prayed, Jane and Vipont read from the same missal, and their heads were so close that her forehead touched his ear. Redhall ground his teeth; and when they turned to each other and smiled (for they could sympathize without speaking), he felt his

heart swell with suppressed passion. His attention, however, soon became divided between Jane and her lover's attendant, who had placed his long sword against the king's pillar, and while affecting to be listening to the panegyric on St. Giles, was in reality studying intently the vast assemblage, and dealing covert glances of hostility, for everywhere he recognised the colours, the crests, and badges of the Hamiltons.

"Despite that voluminous beard, and these painted eyebrows, yonder fellow is either the Earl of Ashkirk or the devil!" thought Redhall; "but let me be wary, for he is slippery as an eel. So, so! our good Sir Roland Vipont, the king's favourite minion, is a resetter of rebels—hah! I have it *now*."

He almost said this aloud, so bright, or rather so dark and so devilish, was the thought that flashed upon his mind. Beckoning to his henchman and factotum—

"Nichol," said he, "thou seest that valet in the livery of Sir Roland Vipont?"

"He wi' that beard like a colt's tail?"

"The same. I would fain have him committed to sure ward—privately though; not in the castle, for there every one would hear of it an hour after, but quietly, in the vault of my own house here. Dost thou understand me?"

"Wi' ease can we do so, my lord," replied Nichol, with a grin on his mastiff mouth, "for by the use o' my long lugs I have just learned that he is to attend the Lady Seton on a visit to St. Katherine's convent to-night."

"Slife! dost thou say so? And that captain of the ordnance, doth he go too?"

"No."

"Ah! and wherefore?"

“Because it seems that the captain of the king’s guard and that gay buckie, Leslie of Balquhan, are to sup with him to-night.”

“Thou art sure of this?” said Redhall, whose heart glowed, and whose eyes sparkled.

“Sure as I am a born man.”

“Watch well, then, and learn more, if you can. Oh, Nichol Birrel, thou art worth thy weight in gold to me—yea, gold trebly refined! Continue to watch them strictly while I go to his eminence the cardinal concerning a raid against the Douglasses; for, mark me, both the Lady Seton and yonder valet of her squire must be safe within our bolts and bars to-night. I have suspected that long beard concealed something for these some days past.”

“And so have I, your lordship.”

“Indeed—remarkable! and you think——”

“As your lordship doth.”

“That he is no other than the Earl of Ashkirk?”

The brodder—who, in fact, had never bestowed a thought upon the matter—now opened his eyes wide with astonishment.

“Deil gae owre us! *he* is worth a bushel o’ silver merks.”

“Which I will pay thee privately, for thy secresy and assistance.”

“And by and bye, I may get the other thousand from the council—eh?”

“Of course.”

“And Sir Roland?”

“Is about to be sent on a fool’s errand into Douglasdale.”

“Disguised as a black friar, I sought admittance to his lodging at St. Anne’s-yard while he was yet a-bed;

for I was bent on probing his wound anew," whispered this bloodhound, with a terrible smile; "but his servitor, a wary auld birkie, that hath served in the border wars, said 'Na, na, my master needs na ghostly counsel, gude father; indeed he seldom confesses, save now and then to Father St. Bernard.' 'But I am a notable apothegar,' said I, under my cowl, 'and cure a' manner o' sword wounds, forbye and attour shot-holes.' 'Ouaye,' he replied, 'but my master hath got from the Lady Ashkirk a notable red salve, that cures a' thing, frae a prick wi' a pin to a slash wi' a Jethart axe. He had but a clean stab frae a poniard, and the salve hath made him whole.' and so, my lord, I came away like a hound that loses the scent."

"Good!" muttered the advocate, opening his notebook. "Vipont seldom goes to confession (that will be information for the cardinal and Fynnard the grand inquisitor), save to the Father St. Bernard (*that* looketh like conspiracy); and he hath actually received a pot of salve from the Countess of Ashkirk, which savoureth of sorcery and working by damnable charms. By my soul, Nichol Birrel," said he, closing his tablets, "thou art an invaluable fellow. The cardinal would give his best benefice for such a spy. I will find military service for the master of the ordnance, and can also dispose of the countess. I have them all in my grasp! Oh, how subtly the web is weaving, and how tangled are the meshes of the plot that will lay them all at my mercy."

Redhall unwittingly thought *aloud*, and his fierce whisper was heard by Birrel. Under the tufted masses of his shock-head, the ruffian gave a leer of delight and intelligence, at least so much as his yellow bilious visage could express, and drew nearer the countess, while Redhall, softly and on tiptoe, lest the jingle of his silver

spurs might be heard, hastened from the church, to seek the lord chancellor (to whom James intrusted everything) concerning the proposed raid to Douglasdale and other projects, of which the reader will soon learn more.

During this conversation, Father St. Bernard had proceeded far with his oration on St. Giles, the abbot and confessor, with a pathos and power of oratory that enchaind the attention of his hearers while it fired and enchanted them. Unacquainted with care, and long separated from the world, the aspect of this venerable prebendary was singularly saintly and winning; his eye was alternately mild and penetrating, and his voice was soft and persuasive. All were irresistibly drawn towards him; and while he spoke, the most profound silence reigned throughout the long dim aisles and misty perspective of that vast and crowded church. With all that filial love and respect which of old a catholic girl felt for her confessor, Lady Jane Seton kept her bright eyes fixed on St. Bernard's face. She was proud of his oratory, his clear and beautiful language, his fervid enthusiasm, and deep research into abstruse writing and the lore of ancient days.

We can give but an outline of how the good father traced the earthly pilgrimage of the city's patron saint, from the day when his eyes first opened to the light in ancient Athens. "It was towards the close of the seventh century," he continued, "and his birth was noble as any in old Cecropia. The dwelling of his father stood near the temple of the Eumenides, and under the brow of that very platform from whence the blessed apostle Paul had preached to the Athenians."

He described his extraordinary learning, his deep and solemn piety, which won for him the admiration of Greece, and other countries far beyond his native pro-

vince of Achaia; so much so that it soon became impossible for him to enjoy in his splendid home the retirement and meditation for which he longed. Shrinking alike from the applause of men and the dangerous temptations of wealth and prosperity, he gave all he possessed to the poor, and bade farewell for ever to Athens and Achaia the beautiful. Sailing towards France, he landed on the open and desert shore near the Rhone, from whence, with a cross on his staff, he travelled into wild places, teaching the blessed gospels to the pagan Gauls, until he reached a forest in the district of Nismes, where then stood a city built by the Roman warriors of Augustus; and there still men and beasts fought like demons in the amphitheatre of Arennes, and the poor pagans worshipped their graven idols in the temple of Diana—for the savage Goths then held the city and all the land around it.

“There, in the vast forest which had been growing since the deluge, St. Giles built him a hermitage, and there,” continued the preacher, “subsisting on the berries and other wild fruits of the desert, with water only for his drink, he passed many years in the voiceless solitude, till, purified by prayer, disengaged from earth, and filled with the ardour of his holy meditations, he became as an angel rather than a man.” He related, too, how the saint planted his cross-staff before the door of his hermitage, and watered it daily, until it took root, sprouted, and grew into a stately orange-tree; and how (like the holy St. Aicard), having once in forgetfulness shaved his bald crown so late on a Saturday night that he encroached on the Sunday morning, when turning about he saw the devil—and here every one crossed themselves—yea, the devil, busily picking up every atom

of hair, to produce the whole against him at the divine tribunal: and how severely he was punished thereafter; for a savage Gothic chief had him seized, scourged, and thrown into one of the Roman towers of Nismes, where he prayed to his Maker in great agony of spirit.

Lo! in the night a halo shone around him, his fetters fell off, the doors of his dungeon revolved, and the clear light of the stars beamed upon him. A deep slumber fell upon his guards, and St. Giles walked forth in peace, to seek once more the shade of his miraculous orange-tree and his beloved hermitage near the dark green woods and bright blue waters of the Rhone.

Now, spreading fast in Gaul, the Goths had made themselves lords of the two Narbonensis and the three Aquitani: in their wild ravages they destroyed even the forests, and by these and their cruelty brought so sore a famine upon the land, that even the saint, in his extreme old age, would have perished, but for the fruit of his orange-tree, and the milk of a doe, which visited him daily, sent doubtless by the Lord, and which became his sole companion and sustenance; and it chanced that when Wamba, king of the Goths, was hunting one day in the forest of Nismes, he was about to slay the doe, but spared her at the saint's intercession, upon which Ionie, his queen, who was almost dying of a grievous sickness, became straightway restored to her former strength and beauty.

St. Giles outlived the famine, and by the miracles he wrought became famous throughout all the land of Gaul, and died at a wondrous old age in that year when the infidel Saracens sacked Nismes; the recapture of which by Charles Martel, mayor of the palace, and the great victory of the Christian knights between Tours and

Poictiers, in the year of our redemption, 728, he foretold, with his last breath; and so, in the full odour of sanctity, he passed away to heaven.

"The doe, the companion of his solitude, was found lying dead by his side; but to this day," continued the venerable priest, in conclusion, "in memory of the saint, we may yet see her retained in the banner of this good city, upon which the blessed St. Giles is now looking down, as upon that of his chosen children, through the dim vista of eight long centuries!"*

He then blessed the people, and descending into one of the side aisles, disappeared.

The vast multitudes who thronged the church now poured from all its doorways like a flood upon the streets, and down the steep old burial-ground that descended on the south towards the Cowgate (a place of interment coeval with the *first huts* of the city), and where a little doorway in the wall, at the bottom, gave egress to that thoroughfare, then so fashionable. It stood just beside the little chapel of the Holy-rood, which survived till the end of the sixteenth century.

As closely as they dared, Nichol Birrel and his friend Dobbie, with their poniards in their belts and wooden rosaries dangling at their better wrists, followed the countess and her party home to her residence, near the court end of the town; and thereafter stationed themselves at the *Cross and Gillstoup*, a small change-house, the low grated windows of which commanded a view of the archway, whereon were carved the coronet and arms of the Setons of Ashkirk; and there the two worthy

* St. Giles was the crest of Edinburgh until 1560, when an anchor was substituted by the Reformers, but the doe still remains as a supporter.

followers of Redhall sat down to drink and watch for the remainder of the afternoon.

At six o'clock, Sir Roland Vipont, with his bonnet on one side, his feather erect, and his rapier tilting up a corner of his mantle, like a true dandy of the sixteenth century, came forth alone, and descended the street towards Holyrood.

"Brawly!" muttered Dobbie, rubbing his large misshapen paws with exultation; "the dare-devil's awa, but the valet is yet there."

"Yea; and the visit to the sister of the Sheens yet holdeth gude. But have ye any money?" asked the pricker.

"Nocht but a Flemish rydar, and three of old king James's gowden pennies."

"Ho there, gudewife!" cried Birrel, with a grin of delight on his mastiff mouth, while he clattered on the hard table with his rosary; fetch us twa mair mutchkins of your wine—that red wine, which I ken right well ye get smuggled contrary to the act, straight frae the Flemmings o' the Dam—quick!"

And while their slipshod attendant was bringing the fresh supply, these worthies proceeded to examine their poniards, in case they should be required, and tried whether the guards were true, the points sharp, the hilts fitting well to the blades, and the blades to the hilts; for to them deeds of outrage and cruelty were the business of life; and we may add that, by the loose lives of the clergy prior to the Reformation—a measure which that very laxity of discipline brought about—religion and morality were fast sinking to a low ebb in Scotland.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHANCELLOR OF SCOTLAND.

“I made such service to our Sovereign King,
He did promote me still to high estate ;
A prince above all priestis for to reign,
Archbishop of St. Andrew's consecrate.
To that honour when I was elevate,
My prideful heart was not content withal,
Till that I was created cardinal.”

Sir D. LINDSAY's *Tragedie of the Cardinal*.

WITH his long rapier under his arm, and his bonnet drawn well over his face, the lord advocate, with all the air of a man who has found a clue to something, or is mentally pursuing a distant object, hurried, as we have said, from the church, and threaded his way between the fleshers' stalls, which encumbered both sides of the street about the Netherbow and arch of the Blackfriars Wynd.

Descending the latter, he reached the residence of cardinal Beaton, where, through the medium of several pages, esquires, and pikemen, he sent up his name, requesting an audience, and was immediately admitted.

David Beaton was then in the prime of life; his stature was commanding, his air was dignified, his bearing noble. As we may see by the portraits of him, still

preserved at Edinburgh, his face was grave, dark, and eminently handsome; his eyes were bright and piercing, and he wore his beard and mustachioes pointed *à la cavalier*, rather than shaven off like a priest. He was seated in an easy-chair, and wore his red baretta, black cassock, and gold cross. His large scarlet hat lay upon a side table, near the two-handed sword of his grandfather, old Sir David of Pitmilny.

Our Scottish Wolsey was seated near a table covered with books and papers; there were several portfolios marked with the fleur-de-lys, the rose, the eagle, &c., containing the memorandums of correspondence with France, England, the Empire, and so forth. The apartment, which was little and elegant, was hung with green damask flowered with leaves of red and gold; his patrimonial arms, the blazon of "Bethune's line of Picardie," appeared above the mantelpiece. There was no fire, for the season was summer, and the andirons were burnished bright as silver. A book was half open in his hand, but his eyes were thoughtfully fixed on a window, through which he saw the antique buildings of the opposite street, a steep wynd, that led towards the Dominican monastery, the square tower and slated spire of which shone in the light of the western sun, and terminated the view. His daughter, the Lady Margaret Beaton, a charming young girl with blue eyes and dark brown hair—the same who, five years after, became the bride of the young Lord Lindsay, was sitting on a little tabourette by his side, decorating a little kitten with ribbons.

As she had been born prior to his taking vows of celibacy, the cardinal had no reason to conceal her; but as soon as Sir Adam Otterburn entered, at a sign from

her father, she kissed his hand, snatched the kitten, which she considered her peculiar property, placed a chair for the visitor, and withdrew.

"God be with your eminence!" said Redhall, half kneeling, as he saluted the cardinal.

"And peace with you," replied Beaton, with a gracious wave of the hand, which, while it pointed to a seat, passed also for a priestly benediction. He closed his book, "*La Legende de Monseigneur Saint Dominique*," &c., an old black letter quarto, "*Imprimé à Paris, 1495*," and continued—"Have I the pleasure of seeing Sir Adam as a friend, or in his official capacity?"

"I trust your eminence will never consider my visits the less friendly because I come so frequently on the service of the state; but now mine errand closely concerns the latter."

"I think that thou, as lord advocate, and I, as lord chancellor, ought to be collared together, like a couple of questing dogs. Well, what in God's name is astir now?"

"Treason!"

"That is nothing new."

"Trafficking with the English—and it may be sorcery!"

"My God! dost thou say so? Those accursed Douglasses, I warrant me?"

Redhall gave an emphatic nod, and put one leg over the other. The cardinal let fall his book, grasped the knobs of his chair, and reclined his head back as if he expected to hear something momentous. "Well, my lord, and what now of this turbulent tribe?"

"I seek a *carte blanche* warrant of arrest and com-

mittal to ward—or rather, concurrence with it—does your eminence understand?”

“Agnus Dei!” said the cardinal, crossing, and speaking with great bitterness and energy; “how sad it is that, from being the bulwark and buckler of Scotland, the house of Angus and its allies have become her sworn foes. Too blindly the enemies of Arran, they never rest while a Hamilton lives, and are too much in Henry’s interest ever again to be true to Scotland. How was it when James assumed the government, and, by the intercession of Wolsey and myself, so unwisely permitted the ambitious earls of Ashkirk and of Angus to return home? No sooner were their feet on Scottish ground, than, ever restless, they raised a faction to expel the queen-mother and the minister Arran, and came at once to blows about where the parliament should meet. ‘I will hold it here,’ said the determined Arran. ‘Thou shalt hold it *there*,’ said the imperious Angus. Then were banners displayed and lances lifted; and Angus and Ashkirk feared not to bend their cannon against the royal castle of Edinburgh, where the young king, the queen-mother, and their prime minister were residing. Then came trooping and hosting, and castles were stormed, and garrisoned, and stormed again; towns were burned and tenants plundered. The high-sheriff of Ayr slew the Earl of Cassilis; the islesmen of Orkney expelled and slew the Lord Caithness; the knight of Tulliallan slew the Abbot of Culrosse; and some ruffian of hell murdered my stedfast friend and true, Sir Thomas Maclelland of Bombie, at the door of St. Giles. (Red-hall felt himself grow pale.) The Douglasses pillaged the castle of St. Andrews and the abbey of Dunfermline; they fought the battles of Melrose and Linlithgow,

where the good Earl of Lennox was so cruelly run through the body after he had surrendered. The whole country seemed to be hastening to destruction, for the swords of the Douglasses bore all before them, and every post, place, and perquisite under the crown, every royal castle and office of state, was held by a Douglas. The royal guards were all Douglasses; and the young king was their prisoner, while his people were reduced to slavery. Well! I then thought the time had come to bestir me," continued the cardinal, with a smile of satisfaction. "I did so; and the king escaped from the tower of Falkland. He summoned the nobles in arms at Stirling; the wheel of fate revolved again, and, deprived of place and power, the Douglasses were proscribed, forfeited, and driven into England—England, whose kings have ever rejoiced in fanning the flame of Scottish civil war—the policy of hell, which none have adopted more than the present atrocious tyrant, their eighth Henry."

"All this I know well," said Redhall, endeavouring to repress his impatience at this retrospective reverie.

"There, fostered by this heretic prince, they have become the enemies of their fatherland, the believers of a false doctrine, the rebels of their king and the accursed of their God. None has done more than the Lord Ashkirk to further a marriage between king James and a daughter of the mansworn Tudor; but happily, I have ever been victorious; for the honour and policy of Scotland and France require that they must league together against the grasping ambition and centralizing greed of England. Thou knowest that I have ever been for France, and bear about as much love for England as a tiger doth to a panther. When Henry

offered his daughter to James, with the office of lieutenant-general of all England and Ireland, happily, I warned him of the gilded snare, and dismissed the ambassador, Howard, with a remembrance of how England had treated the shipwrecked James I. When Godscallo came from the emperor Charles to offer his sister Mary of Austria as a queen for Scotland, who defeated him, and turned his dangerous eloquence against himself?"

"Your eminence," said Redhall, putting the left leg over the right.

"When he offered Donna Maria of Portugal, the daughter of Elinor of Austria," resumed Beaton, with a smile of gratified vanity, "and boasted of her beauty and the sixty battles of her victorious uncle, who waved all his sophistry by a word?"

"Your eminence, of course," sighed Redhall.

"When Christian II. of Denmark offered *his* daughter, the princess Dorothea, though she was already contracted to the beggarly elector Frederick, I dismissed him, and briefly too; for my whole soul was bent on preserving the ancient league of amity, that together the banners of Scotland and France might be turned against their common enemy; and by my own energy, assisted by God and our Blessed Lady, I had the young queen Magdalene espoused to James; and now let the Douglases do their worst, for, ratified before the holy altar of Notre Dame de Paris, that alliance can never be broken!"

"Death will break it," said the advocate, revengefully, for he was somewhat irritated by this long preamble. "Magdalene is dying by inches, and there are abroad such rumours of sorcery in the matter that I crave a warrant to seize——"

"Whom?" asked Beaton, with terrible a glance.

"The Countess of Ashkirk and her daughter, the Lady Jane Seton," said Redhall, with a sinking heart.

"Margaret of Ashkirk?" said the cardinal, with a look of blank astonishment, "the widow of the good Earl John? Beware thee, my lord, lest zeal outrun discretion. Her husband was a stout knight and true to Scotland."

"As I tell your eminence that his widow is an ill-woman and false! Her son, the outlawed earl, hath again re-entered Scotland by the Middle Marches."

"Thou dost not say so?"

"Sure as I live and breathe."

"On what errand?"

"Can you ask?" said Redhall, with a smile; "treason, civil war, and the destruction of the Hamiltons, no doubt. And with the knowledge that he is an outlawed traitor, the countess hath reset him."

"Natural enough, he is the poor woman's son."

"But the master of the ordnance hath likewise done so."

"Natural enough, too, for he is said to love the earl's sister."

"Your eminence is strangely cool in this matter," said Redhall, grinding his teeth; "but you know not all that common rumour sayeth."

"Ah! what the devil says it now?"

"That the young queen is dying," replied the advocate, drawing near, sinking his voice impressively, and presuming even to grasp his arm; "sorcery is at work; every man who looks upon her reads death in her face, and the hopes of Henry that James may yet marry his daughter are rising again."

"Hah!" There was a brief pause.

"And what wouldst thou have?" asked Beaton.

"Permission to seize and commit to sure ward the Countess of Ashkirk and her daughter—a measure demanded by the safety of the nation."

Beaton shook his head.

"Rumour is busy, and avers that the earl is concealed within the ports of Edinburgh," continued the wily advocate, who, for his own ends, did not choose to say *where*; "my spies inform me that he has been heard to boast of being, ere long, at Stirling bridge, with an army of English borderers, for he hath made a vow to sup——"

"Where?"

"In thy tower of Creich."

The dark eyes of Beaton flashed fire; for in the tower of Creich, rumour (which in those days supplied, somewhat indifferently, however, the place of the public press) asserted that the cardinal kept quite a seraglio. It touched him in the quick.

"The earl said so—ha!" he muttered, opening his portfolio; "indeed—um—um—and where dost thou wish the countess committed to ward?"

"Your eminence's castle of St. Andrew is a sure place."

"I send none there but heretics; the tower of Inchkeith is a stronger fortlet."

"The Knight of Barncleugh is captain there—a Hamilton too."

"Very suitable," continued the cardinal, writing on a slip of paper a warrant to arrest and imprison, 'during the king's pleasure, Margaret countess dowager, and the lady Jane, daughter of the umquhile John earl of Ashkirk, together with Archibald Seton, sometyme designated of Ashkirk, but now under sentence of forfeiture.' "Send the Albany herald to the countess, and

let him take some fifteen pikes of my guard; one of Sir Robert Barton's boats will convey the ladies to the Inch. Of late, James has shown over much favour to this family, whose besetting sin has been their leaguings with England; and I hope that, ere long," continued Beaton, thinking of the tower of Creich, "this troublesome young lord will pay the penalty of his insolence to me and his crimes against the state——"

"My lord the Bishop of Limoges," announced the young Lord Lindesay, the cardinal's favourite page, ushering in that reverend prelate.

"Your eminence will not omit to send the requisite troops and cannon towards Douglasdale to-morrow, for Ashkirk may be there," said the lord advocate, rising.

"Before vespers, Sir Roland Vipont shall hear from me," replied Beaton, as Redhall sank on one knee, kissed the ruby ring on his finger, and hurried away with a hasty step and a beating heart.

CHAPTER XV.

THE NOON OF LOVE.

“He looked upon her, and her humid gaze
Was at his look dropped instant on the ground :
But o'er her cheek of beauty rushed a blaze,
Her bosom heaved within its silken bound—
And though her voice is trembling as I sigh,
Love triumphs in her smile and fond delicious eye.”

Cærol's Angel of the World.

THE sun was in the west, and threw the long shadow of the Netherbow so far down the vista of the Canon-gate that it almost reached to the Girth-cross of the Holy Rood. Save when the summer wind made strange sounds among the peaked roofs and enormous chimneys of the narrow closes, the streets were still and quiet. A hoof rang occasionally, just as if to remind one that they were recently paved for the first time; or the distant cries were heard of those who sold curds and milk at the cross, or cockles and wilks at the Tron, as we may learn from William Dunbar's poem in the year 1500.

The countess and her family had just adjourned from the dining-hall to that tapestried chamber in which we had the honour of first introducing them to the reader. With no foreboding of the mischief that was then brewing against them at that moment in the little turret-

room of the cardinal's mansion, the good old lady Margaret and all around her were very happy.

Roland instinctively drew to the side of Jane, who approached her embroidery frame, for ladies were never idle in those industrious days; Earl Archibald seated himself by the side of Sybil, where he could very well have spared the additional company of her companions, Marion and Alison, who seated themselves near, to hear her perform on the virginals; and the countess assumed her accustomed and well-cushioned bench, in the sunny corner of a window, where the shadows of the thick basket grating were thrown upon her face. Drawing her spinning-wheel towards her with one hand, she made a motion with the other to Father St. Bernard to sit near; for the confessor had that day been invited to dinner the moment his oration concluded.

"I pray heaven I may not hear some evil tidings," said the countess, "for the wind is so high."

"Nay, fear not, madam, for this is Friday," replied the old priest, "and the festival of queen Ellen to boot."

"And yet I remind me, father, that in the days of king James IV., I heard the wind soughing just so, and in two hours thereafter news came frae the west countrie that my kinsman, Sir John Colquhoun of Luss, who was lord chamberlain and ambassador to England in 1487, was killed at the siege of Dunbarton, by a ball from a culverin."

"In 1489—yea, madam, I mind that leaguer well, as if 'twere yesterday."

"Eight and forty years ago," said the countess. "St. Mary! I was but a wee tot at my mother's knee in the auld tower of Kilspondie then!"

"Udsdagger!" whispered the earl to Sybil, "the old

lady my mother is full tilt again at her musty recollections of James IV."

"She will soon dose poor Father St. Bernard with her salves, her charms against witchcraft, and prosy reminiscences of Flodden and queen Margaret."

"And he will reply with scriptural texts and astounding miracles. On my honour, they are a pair of the most veritable prozers between the tower of Creich and the tower of Babel!"

"Hush! to mention that tower of Creich in the cardinal's hearing makes one his enemy for life."

"Fiend take the cardinal and his red hat to boot!" whispered the earl, "for in England I have learned to laugh both at red legs and shaven crowns. But now, my own fair cousin, sing me, I pray, the old song of Duke Albany's days, that song my father loved so well. In Holyrood it might be treason to sing of a French minion's fall, but none are here save friends; and oh, my dear Sybil, thou knowest not how blythe I am to hear thy soft low voice again. Do not refuse me," he added, seeing that she was about to object; "for in a day or two I go to exile again, and we may meet no more."

The young noble gallantly kissed a handful of Sybil's long dark hair; and in the desire to please her handsome lover, she at once commenced one of those old songs, to which something of a melancholy interest will ever cling, when we consider that they cheered or soothed our Scottish sires three hundred years ago—

"God send that the duke had byded in France,
And the Sieur de la Beauté had never come hame,
With his tall men-at-arms, by banner and lance,
The Douglas, the Home, and the Seton to tame."*

* See VEDDERBÜRNE'S *Complainte of Scotland*, printed at St. Andrews, A.D. 1549.

The voice of Sybil was worthy of her name; it was bewitchingly soft and low and sweet; but the sharp, wiry, and somewhat unmusical accompaniment of the virginal, rather injured than improved the effect of her performance, which was admirable; for the frank girl was at no pains to conceal the amiable wish to please her kinsman and lover. Seated very erectly upon a high-backed chair, her white hands tinkled over the keys of this old-fashioned instrument, which, perhaps, obtained its name from being played upon almost solely by young ladies. Though externally not unlike our modern pianoforte, the virginal was internally more like the spinet of the succeeding age, which formed, in fact, the link between the two.

That on which Sybil played had been presented to Jane Seton by Anne de la Tour, the late Duchess of Albany. The case was of cedar, covered with blue Genoese velvet, and clasped by four large gilded locks finely engraven with the arms of Scotland and France. The whole of the front was magnificently enamelled, and had forty keys provided with jacks and quills, twenty being of ebony tipped with silver, and twenty of ivory tipped with gold, to mark the semitones. Supported by two dragons of oak, it was only five feet long by twenty inches deep; but as there were but few virginals in Scotland, its splendour formed one of the topics of the day; and those evil minds were not wanting who affirmed that it was merely a box of devils who played at the command of the black page.

Thus, while singing and soft glances were the entertainment in one corner of that tall tapestried room, miracles and omens in another, a quiet little flirtation was proceeding in a third, where Lady Jane was sit-

ting, to all appearance very intent upon her embroidery, while her lover leant over the back of her chair, conversing in low tones, looking kisses and all manner of soft things, and contriving to say a good many too, under cover of Sybil's musical performance, notwithstanding the presence of Father St. Bernard, whose apostolical aspect was sufficiently imposing.

"And so, my gentle Jeanie, thou art still bent on visiting this convent of Sienna to-night?"

"Have I not told you ten times that I have promised this book as a birthday gift to the reverend mother ever since the martyrdom of St. Victor—more than a month ago," said Jane, reckoning the time on her pretty fingers; "and she has never yet received it. By the by, sir—of all the world, I think thou oughtest to accompany me to-night."

"Impossible, my own sweetheart."

"What would you say if I were to be carried off?"

"Carried off! Bah! I should like to see any one carry you off."

"It would be very unpleasant," said Jane, shrugging her shoulders; "and within a month of our marriage, too."

"Adorable Jane!"

"Hush! Father St. Bernard—you forget."

"You know well how gladly I would go; but as I have said, both the captain and lieutenant of the king's guard have sent to say, they will do themselves the pleasure of supping with me to-night, and hospitality requires that I should not decline, for we are three *bon camarados*, and have made a compact to dine and sup with each other alternately whenever our cash was low."

"Then the cash of these wild gallants is gone?"

"Sunk to the lowest ebb, Jane. I met them this morning, swearing like Turks, for they had lost all they possessed, even to their rings, at the French ambassador's. With the earl and his enormous Tizona, and these tall trenchermen, who are always lounging about the kitchen-fire and stable-yard, none will dare to molest you to-night."

"Be not too certain. Oh, I have so many lovers, that I dare scarcely look from under my hood, lest I add one to the number. Abduction is not so uncommon, surely. Did not king James carry off the lady of Lochlevin on her bridal night? Is not the Knight of Casche now a prisoner in the castle for carrying off the wife of Sir David Scott, whom he slew in the kirk of Strathmiglo? And 'tis only six days since Kincaid of Coates forcibly abducted the poor wife of master Quentin Smebard, when she was cheapening her a new hood at the Tron—yea, in the High-street, and at noon-day."

"Tush! a pitiful clerk of the chancery," said Roland, playing with her curls. "Believe me, my little ladykin, that none will dare meddle with thee who see the livery of thy followers, and remember thou art the affianced bride of Sir Roland Vipont. So in vain, cunning fairy, thou wouldest frighten me from performing what friendship and hospitality require. But what is this book, for which madam the prioress of St. Katherine is so anxious?"

"See, it is *The Lyf of St. Katherin of Sienna*," said Jane, opening a little volume of Wynkyn de Worde's, the velvet cover of which she had embroidered beautifully with gold upon crimson. "Thou canst read this black letter, of course?"

"Why, thanks to fortune and my good friend the father here, I learned the *Grace Buke* and *Prymar*, at the principal grammar school of this good burgh, when it was first opened by provost Logan of Coatfield."

"In the year of grace 1519," said the countess, "just six years after the death of the good king James, whose munificence founded it—woe's me!"

"And why doth this prioress not embroider her own books? How, i' the devil's name, do they spend the long dull day in yonder convent; for I vow 'tis a fortress all walled round like the city of Lisle—and I suppose the fair sisters are never beyond it."

"Save when sickness or sorrow, want or misery, call them into the world; for they are of inestimable service to the poor. Ah! had you seen them in time of the plague. The prioress Josina—thou rememberest the beautiful Josina Henrison, who with me was a damoiselle of honour to madam the Duchess Anne of Albany? Ah! she is a very angel of goodness. Now, do not look in that way, as if you were just about to laugh at me?"

"Who—I? Mass! I would almost have fallen sick on purpose, to have had such a nurse as the pretty Josina—had I not——"

"What, sir?"

"Loved thee, and consequently been sure of another."

"'Tis well you say so," replied Jane, playfully, pinching his ear. "Ah! my mother is watching us!"

"God bless ye, bairns!" said the old countess kindly and fondly; "for ye were born under the same star, ilk being destined for the other."

"*Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum*," said Father St. Bernard, with closed eyes, and waving his right hand towards them.

"Plague take thy Latin," muttered the earl.

"Which meaneth, the peace of the Lord be about you," continued the priest.

"I never tried Latin but once, good father, and then it was to curse roundly when my Scottish failed—in *nomine patris et filii*, and so forth."

"And when was this, my son?"

"Retreating up Yarrow-braes from Cessford's spearmen, with two bullets and three arrows sticking in my body."

The old priest crossed himself, and turned up his eyes; but those of the countess kindled as her son spoke, and some fiery remark was hovering on her lips, when her bower-woman, a demure looking abigail, clad in solemn black taffety, raised the arras, glided in on tiptoe, and whispered something in her ear.

Lady Ashkirk turned very pale.

"Mother dear," said Lady Jane, tenderly; "what has happened?"

"That hen hath crowed again, as Janet tells me."

"Hen—what hen?" said the earl.

"An ill-omened hen in the poultry-yard, whilk hath now crown thrice since you came among us. Oh! my doo Archibald! my doo Archibald!—it's a sad boding of evil, whilk the Mother o'God avert."

"Amen!" said the old priest, "*pax domini*——"

"Friend Roland," said the earl, with a smile, "did you ever know any one who dwelt in such an atmosphere of omens and predictions, salves and recipes, as the good lady my mother? 'Tis very perplexing, to say the least of it."

"Hush, lord earl!" said the countess, with some asperity; "every bairn kens that the crowing of a hen bodeth evil, and that no house can thrive where the hens are addicted to sic an ungodly and unnatural

amusement. Harkee, Janet, let its neck be drawn, and bestow it as an almous on the first Franciscan who comes hither wi' his begging box."

This episode was rather "a damper" to the ladies; but Roland endeavoured to divert them, by engaging and vanquishing them all successively at the old French military game of *passe dix*, which was played with three dice, at which (as we learn from the *Complete Gamester*, 1680) "the caster throws continually till he hath thrown doublets under ten, and then he is *out*, and loseth, or doublets above ten, and then he *passeth*, and wins." At this simple game fortune favoured Roland, and he swept off the entire passbank, which was composed of little *bon-bons* of honey and flour, for sugar was then growing in the mist of futurity—at least, it was unknown in Scotland. The time stole swiftly on; at last the ringing of vespers warned him that he must retire, as his friends, who had so annoyingly invited themselves, would be awaiting him.

"Say a prayer for me at St. Katherine's to-night, my dear Jane," said Roland, as he buckled on his rapier. "I fear me I am a sad rogue, and often omit to pray for myself in these stirring times, when one's armour is so rarely off; and of all things, forget not to give my very best commendations to the fair Josina."

"Sirrah! thou wantest thine other ear well pinched."

"And you return?"

"To-morrow, at noon."

"Ah—the devil! and shall I not see thee till then?" said Roland, scared at the prospect of an eighteen hours separation.

"Thou wilt not die of despair in that time, surely?" replied Jane, archly.

"Then to-morrow, at noon, I will be at the convent

gate, or under the old lime-trees that border its pathway, near the loch; and so till then, my sweet flower, farewell."

After paying his adieux to all with that grave formality which French intercourse had impressed upon the manners of the Scottish noblesse, he retired; whereupon the messieurs Birrel and Dobbie ordered in the additional stoup of Flemish wine, as we have related in the thirteenth chapter of this history.

CHAPTER XVI.

VIPONT'S HOUSEHOLD.

"At length they to the house retreated,
And round the supper soon were seated;
When the time quickly passed away,
And gay good humour closed the day."

Dr. Syntax, Canto XIV.

HAVING lost all their money at play with the French and Spaniards, Roland's two comrades, the captain of the arquebusiers, and Leslie, his lieutenant, had both invited themselves to sup with him on that evening, according (as he has already stated) to an arrangement the three friends had made—that he whose exchequer was low should dine or sup with the others. But now it chanced that Roland's purse was drained too; and though hospitality and the manners of the time forbade the least evasion of this visit, or rather visitation, old Lintstock had fully participated in the consternation it occasioned his master. Lintstock, however, with the coolness of an old soldier, who was well used to foraging, begged Sir Roland to keep his mind at ease, as he would provide an adequate supper by the hour of the cavaliers' arrival.

Roland knew not what to make of this; but he was aware of the fertility of his valet's resources, and that the cunning old vender of projectiles had made love to

an inn (as he said), or rather an innkeeper's widow, whom he had been intending to espouse for the last five years; thus he doubted not Lintstock would provide the viands if heaven did not.

Roland lodged with the widow of one of the king's falconers; but the pittance he received per month from the exchequer (for although styled master of the ordnance, he was in reality only captain of a few hundred cannoneers, who were scattered throughout the royal castles), afforded little more than what soldiers usually term comforts — *i.e.*, plain bed, board, and quarters. He was never so much in camp or garrison as to lose the polish of the courtier or relish for the society of ladies. The "rough and round" of a soldier's life never discomposed him; he wore his heavy armour as easily as Jane Seton did her gloves of Blois; and his love for her threw a poetry around all that plainness and positive discomfort which generally surrounded him, but of which she was totally ignorant. Soldiering had, of course, considerably sharpened his faculties; but Roland never forgot the gentle bearing of the perfect cavalier; and though perhaps inferior in head to such a man as Sir Adam Otterburn, he was immensely his superior in heart and straightforwardness of purpose.

Roland's windows overlooked the Abbey Close, and the setting sun shone partly through them. They were strongly grated, and lighted a room which was wainscotted with Scottish fir, and furnished with six hardwood chairs and a table of oak. An almerie or corner cupboard, a boxed bed within a recess, a suit of bright armour, and a quantity of other harness for horse and man, with various weapons, hung upon pegs; a few books of old romances, and a French *Manuel de l'Artilleur*, made up its furniture.

"What the devil shall I do, if Lintstock has failed?" thought Roland, as he entered his domicile. "Hallo, old Ironhead, how goeth the supper?" (People supped then at seven o'clock.)

"Right weel, Sir Roland, as ye may see for yoursel," replied the old fellow, over whose broad visage and solitary eye there spread a brilliant smile of self-satisfaction.

A snow-white cloth covered the old oak-table; a knife, a drinking-horn, and platter were laid for each of the friends; a silver salt-cellar occupied the centre; a plate, with four roasted ducks, stood on one side thereof, a tart and stewed pigeons on the other, with a joint of veal daintily roasted; while an eel-pie and two large manchets of white flour, with other et cetera, appeared on the side buffet, with a row of wine-flasks in fair battaglia, side by side, telling by their gaudy badges that they were from France, and such wine as was then sold by the retailers at sixpence Scots (one halfpenny sterling) the pint, under penalty of having the head of the cask beaten out, as an edict of the provost and baillies in 1520 remains to show.

"By Jove, thou art the very fiend himself!" said Roland, lost in astonishment at the sight of all these good things; "how else couldst thou get these gallant bottles of Rochelle and Bourdeaux from that old curmudgeon of the *Cross and Gillstoup*—for I see they bear his mark. On my honour, I am mightily tickled by thine ingenuity!"

"I said we would pay——"

"*We?*"

"That is, your worship would pay them at eventide, the morn."

"Why, Lintstock, I have not had a cross for these three days."

"But there is a rumour about the palace," said Lintstock, closing his remaining eye, "that we march by daylight, the morn, for Douglasdale, or thereawa; and sae the auld screw of an hosteller may whistle on his thumb for the money till we come back again."

"March! oh, impossible—for I have not heard a word of it; and how then shouldst thou? I warrant me the old cullion grumbled."

"Like a boar in a high wind. 'Thou false knave and loon,' said I, with a hand on my dirk, just so; 'these twelve flasks are for the captain, my master.' 'He owes me thirty crowns and mair,' replied the dour carle. 'If he owed thee ten times as muckle, 'tis all right, for he will pay thee some day, and nobly too; so hand me over the flasks, or I will set the house on fire, and flay thee like St. Bartholomew!'"

"But the veal and the ducks?"

"I fished for one, and borrowed the other—but here come our gentlemen."

Roland gave Lintstock one of the flasks to rejoice over, and laughed. He knew well what the old forager meant, for the royal poultry-yard was close by, and Lintstock, with a piece of meat tied to a string, as a lure for King James's full-fed ducks, had many a time and oft towed them in at the back-windows, with outspread wings; and more than one dozen of fowls had disappeared thus, to the astonishment of the royal poulterer.

"But the pigeons?"

"I shot with my arblast at Redhall's dovecot."

"And the eels?"

"I borrowed them frae the abbot's eel-arks, at the Canonmills loch."

"Mass! thou'st had a busy day on't. Never mind;

when I have the mains of Ashkirk with—tush, I will repay all these debts and borrowings with usury.”

With a towel under his arm, the old gunner drew himself up like a post, as the two cavaliers entered, attired in velvets richly laced and slashed, and looking very gay and smiling.

“Welcome, Sir John Forrester!—and thou too, my gay Leslie! Ah! where didst get that scratch on thy nose?”

“From the fan of little Sybil Douglas, at the queen’s masque yesterday.”

“The little firefly! Seats, gentlemen, seats! By my faith, you are in ill-luck. ’Tis quite a fast-day with me, this, and you will sup like starveling Franciscans.”

“Fast!” said tall Forrester, as he threw aside his cloak and plume: “by St. Roque! if this is a fast day, what are thy festivals? But who is thy provant master—thy *fourrier de campement*?”

“My servitor—my trusty Lintstock.”

“Mass! would that I had such a valet as thou, and such noble credit with my wine-merchant. Thou seest, Leslie, what it is to be the king’s favourite. Verily, Sir Roland Vipont carries a coronet on the point of his sword. Rogue! thou must pray well to have all these good things.”

“Nay, nay,” said young Leslie, with a burst of reckless laughter, “he pays old father St. Bernard to do all that for him.”

“Hast heard the news?”

“Nay, what news, Sir John?”

“Thou art to bouné thee for the borders; for the king swore in my hearing he would find other work for thy sword than killing his most favourite courtiers.”

"These rascally Hamiltons? But Kincavil is not dead, I hope?"

"Far from it," said Leslie; "but the apothegar, from whom I was purchasing some perfumes for little Sybil Douglas, averred to me that he is in a perilous bad way."

"When did these knaves of leeches ever aver a man was otherwise?" said Roland, seating himself. "To table, gentlemen, and pray do justice to the industry of my fourrier, and the comforts of my poor den, or hermitage, which you will; but prayer or no prayer, take care the cardinal heareth not of your jesting, Leslie—about prayers, I mean."

"The cardinal, that scarlet bugbear of the heretics? Oh, I don't fear the cardinal; he is the steadfast friend and true of my kinsman Norman, the Master of Rothés."

"A slice of this veal, Leslie?"

"Nay, I thank you; this roasted duck is quite admirable."

"'Tis from my estates in the country somewhere."

"Rochelle—or Bourdeaux?"

"Thank you—what news are abroad?"

"Nothing," said Forrester, "but of the queen having fainted twice to-day—poor little woman—to the consternation of Madame de Montreuil, De Brissac, the king, and all his court."

"How pure this Bourdeaux is—spiced, too!" said Vipont. "His eminence, the cardinal (whom God long preserve!)——"

"Save us, friend Roland!" said Leslie; "thou art turning very religious."

"Is about to take such measures as shall assuredly exterminate the followers of those heretics, Resby, the

Englishman, and the abbot of Fearn. Master Buchanan is now in the oubliette of St. Andrews, where he will likely pay dearly for his satire *Franciscanus*."

"His eminence should confine himself to the pretty little amusements afforded by his country-house at Creich," said Forrester.

"Didst thou see that poor devil drowned to-day?"

"Who, Leslie?"

"He whom the king's advocate discovered burying a cat alive."

"Nay, I was hawking with the king on the Figgatemuir—the more fool I! Lintstock, thou knave!" cried Vipont to that functionary—who stood erect as a pike behind his chair—"uncork me half-a-dozen of these flasks. Drain, gentlemen, and replenish again; wine is a specific for care—worth a thousand homilies!"

"Lucky dog!" said Forrester; "thou drinkest out of horns hooped with silver, while I, who am lord of Corstorphine and Uchtertyre, must content me with plain beech luggies."

"Lintstock found them during our last raid into Westmoreland. Nevertheless, Sir John, thank heaven that you were not, like me, born with a most portentous wooden spoon in your mouth. I was an unlucky brat, and cried, it seems, like a pagan at my baptism; a bad omen, as the Lady Ashkirk told me. Fill again; but excuse me—my wound, you know."

"Ah! that dainty dagger-thrust; but it is healing fast?"

"By the total absence of an apothegar—yes. Hah! yonder is a gay dame, followed by an esquire with the argent and gules in his bonnet, crossing the Abbey Close. My faith! 'tis Lady Anne of Arran, whom rumour says thou lovest, Leslie."

"How! that muirland-meg, Anne Hamilton? Ah! what a taste I must have!" replied Leslie.

"Nay, thou wrongest him, Vipont," said Sir John of Corstorphine; "'tis Marion Logan of Restalrig, who hath thy heart; is it not, lieutenant of mine?"

Leslie laughed, and coloured as he replied—

"'Tis Marion whom we see, and not the Lord Arran's daughter." The three gallants hastened to the window, as a lady, holding up her brocaded skirt in that fashion which the witty Knight of the Mount reprehended in his satires, passed into a door of the palace.

"Hast thou seen what Lindesay's new poem says of yonder fashion of skirt-bearing?" said Forrester:—

"I trow St. Bernard, nor St. Blaise,
Caused never man bear up their claise;
Nor Peter, Paul, nor St. Andrew,
Bore up their tails like these, I trow;
But I laugh most to see a nun
Cause bear her tail——"

"The rest is vile ribaldry," said Vipont.

"And by St. Bernard, and St. Blaise to boot, Sir David deserves to be run through the body for so severely satirizing the ladies of Holyrood. Ha! who cometh next?—the cardinal!"

As he spoke, Beaton, with a cavalcade of horsemen, passed through the Abbey Close on an evening ride.

"He sits on his horse like a true cavalier," said Vipont, withdrawing a pace, as he observed the cardinal scrutinizing his windows.

"But observe the Abbot of Kinloss; he always rides faster than his horse, and hangs on the bridle like a drowning man."

"His roan nag is covered with foam, while those of the cardinal and his gentlemen are fresh as when they left their stalls."

"The daughter of his eminence and the young Lord Lindesay are riding together," said Vipont; "a love case that, I think."

Amid jesting and laughing—for their light hearts and the somewhat reckless manners of the time, when the sword was rarely out of men's hands, imparted an almost boisterous gaiety to the supper—the evening closed in, cloudy and grey; darkness approached, and candles were lighted. The clock struck half-past eight; but there were still four flasks uncorked, when Lintstock entered, with a portentous expression in his remaining eye, and laid before his master a square packet, tied with blue ribands, which, like the edicts of council, were officially sealed with green wax.

"The devil! now what doth this portend?" muttered his friends.

"If the king knows that I have harboured a rebel lord!" thought Roland, breathlessly, "my commission would be worth about as much as my head. By the faith of Vipont! 'tis in the name of the king, and countersigned by the cardinal too!"

"To our trusty friend, Sir Roland Vipont, of that ilk."

"JAMES REX.

"Right trusty friend, we greet you well and heartillie.

"It is our royal will and pleasure, that with one hundred arquebussiers of our guard, under Louis Leslie of Balquhan, and two brass culverins, with their powder, shot, and cannoneers conform, you do march to-morrow

at daybreak unto Douglasdale, for the capture, dead or alive, of Archibald Seton, sometime Earl of Archkirk, our rebel and traitor, who is rumoured to be resett in that district; where, without fail, you will give all to fire and sword, be it castle or be it cottage, wherein the said lord findeth shelter; for which you have this our warrant. Hoping that you will do your devoir truly and valiantly, according to the custom observit of auld, we commit you to the protection of God.

DAVID,

*“ Cardinal, Sancti Andreae, Commendator de Arbroath,
Chancellor of Scotland.**

“From our Palace of Holyrood,
the 20th day of May, 1537.”

“There, now, was not rumour right for once?” said Forrester.

“Still the same enmity to my unfortunate friend!” said Roland, whose face became pale, and whose teeth were clenched with anger.

“So we are to search for Lord Ashkirk among the Douglasses,” laughed Leslie; “a right perilous expedition. Take thy tall valet with thee, Vipont. ’Fore heaven! that fellow, with his prodigious sword, were worth a troop of lances on such a service.”

Roland glanced keenly at the speaker. Had he penetrated the earl’s disguise? but there was nothing to be read but pure honesty and candour in Leslie’s handsome features. He suspected not that the dictators

* It is thus the Cardinal signed his name to more than one document in the author’s possession.

of the order he had just received, knew well that the earl was much nearer than Douglasdale.

"Ha! do you not hear something?" said Roland, rising up and listening.

"The cry of a woman, as I live!" replied Leslie; "shrill and deathly, too, as of one in sore distress; and there, now, is the patter of pistolettes!"

"Look out Lintstock—thy one eye is worth a dozen—at the back window—what seest thou?"

"Torches moving about on St. John's Hill, the gleam of steel, and I hear the cries of a woman; eh, sirs, but she scraighs dreichly and eerilie!" was the reply of Lintstock, as he snatched up a partisan.

"To your swords, and away, gentlemen!" cried Roland, unhooking his rapier from the wall; "'tis a woman in distress! Meanwhile, Lintstock, away thou to the castle, seek my firemaster and his matrosses, and desire that two pieces of cannon and sixteen men in their armour, with horses and all in fighting order, be before the palace by daybreak to-morrow; look well to my own horses and new coat of mail too. And now, sirs, let us go, in God's name!" and with their mantles rolled round their left arms, and swords unsheathed, they sprang down stairs, and dashed up the south back of the Canongate, towards the base of St. John's Hill.

They saw no one, the place was desolate, and perfectly silent.

The moon, which had been partially obscured, shone forth for a moment, and revealed a pool of blood on the dusty road which skirted the base of the hill. Near it lay a lady's glove, and a man's bonnet of coarse blue cloth, but no other traces of a fray.

On the bonnet was a pewter badge.

"'Tis the cognisance of Redhall," said Roland, tossing the bonnet away, and placing the glove in his belt.

After frequently hallooing, and searching long and fruitlessly, the three friends again sought St. Ann's Yard, but not to finish the remaining flasks; for Roland and Leslie had to prepare for their march by daybreak on the morrow, and now the hour was late.

CHAPTER XVII.

A LORD ADVOCATE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

"*Camillo*. Thou execrable man, beware!—

"*Cenci*. Of thee?

Nay this is idle:—We should know each other.

As to my character for what men call *crime*,

Seeing I please my senses as I list,

And vindicate that right with force of guile,

It is a public matter, and I care not

If I discuss it with you."

The Cenci.

THE young earl and Lady Sybil were loath to part, for they had met but recently; and after a long and painful separation—painful by its danger and uncertainty—and full of themselves and their plans for the future, the hours stole swiftly past them. Thus the earl delayed so long in accompanying his impatient sister, that the dusk had almost set in before they left the house, on their promised visit to her friend at St. Katherine's, where Jane proposed remaining until the noon of the next day.

The night was cloudy, and the streets were dark and misty, so that two men, who emerged half tipsy from the *Cross and Gillstoup*, following them softly and warily, and at the gate of Redhall's house were joined by five others, were quite unobserved.

The earl was still disguised and liveried as Vipont's valet. He wore a cuirass below his doublet, and carried the conspicuous long rapier over his shoulder. Jane was muffled in a close hood, so as to be completely unknown to the few persons who were abroad in the dusk; and thus with security she accompanied him, and leant upon his arm. Two servants of their own name, from the earl's barony in Forfarshire, marched before them with lighted links. Both these men were tall, athletic and well armed, with jacks and caps of iron, swords, daggers, and hacques, or small hand guns, about three-quarters of a yard long. In those dangerous times every trifling visit and affair had quite the aspect of a conspiracy.

The brother and sister were chatting merrily, and each was speaking of the person whose image and interest lay nearest their hearts; thus Jane spoke of Roland, his courage and sincerity, his truth and hope; and of King James's ingratitude in neglecting to reward his valour and loyal service.

The earl spoke of his dark-eyed Sybil, and how he would one day place his father's coronet on her brow; and would do so on the morrow, if she would but fly with him to England, where they might wed without that dispensation which was yet required in Catholic Scotland, as they were both within the prohibited degrees; a dispensation which the cardinal's hostility, he feared, would withhold for ever; for Beaton was legate of Paul III., north of the English frontier.

Rendered wary by necessity, and from the nature of the times instinctively cautious, the earl looked back more than once to observe whether they were followed. The streets were almost deserted, and echoed to no

other footsteps than their own. They descended the Canongate, which was then more open, and less regular as a street, than now; and passing down a narrow loan between hedges, having a barnyard on one side, and a large "Berne-Kilne and Kobill" (the appurtenances of an ancient distillery) on the other, they found themselves in the solitary horseway which skirted the city on the south, and led straight from the Cowgate Porte to the Palace and St. Anne's Yard.

One one side the craigs heaved up their tremendous front; on the other rose a lofty ridge, at the north end of which stood a chapel of St. John, at the south end a chapel dedicated to St. Leonard, the Hermit of Orleans, and midway between, the sharp ridgy roof of a large convent—St. Mary's of Placentia—cut the sky. About its walls grew a number of willows, planted by the fair recluses, in the spirit of that beautiful old tradition which tells that our Saviour had been scourged by willow rods, for which offence the trees had drooped or wept in sorrow ever after. And there the migrating crossbills built their nests, a bird, said by another old legend to have taken its name from the circumstance of having striven with its little bill to draw forth the nails from the feet and hands of the dead Christ.

A faint and pale light in the east, brought the ridge and its triple edifices forward in strong outline, and the gigantic willows were seen waving their graceful branches mournfully in the rising wind. The darkness of utter obscurity veiled the front of the craigs, and the deep hollow at their base, then a rough and savage gorge, round the edge of which lay the road the earl and his sister were to pursue.

A bell rang.

"Oh, Archibald, let us hasten," said Lady Jane; "the nuns are already saying the compline at St. Mary's yonder; see how the chapel is lighted up."

"Faith! my good sister, I have dwelt so long under English Henry's roof, that I have well-nigh forgotten these small items of our ancient faith. I have seen church lands turned into fair lay-baronies, and more than one stately priory become an earl's fief, its chapel a dining hall, its cloisters a stable-yard, its refectory a dog's-kennel. But omit not to ask the fair Josina* to say one prayer for me, though I *am* such a reprobate pagan. By all the furies! it seems very droll to think that my little friend Josina hath become a prioress! I cannot realize it! She will have quite forgotten me."

"Do not think so, for she still uses the missal you gave her before——"

"My kinswoman Sybil came home from the convent at Northberwick," said the earl, quickly; "poor Josina!—and I shall see her once more."

"To-morrow at noon, when you and Roland come for me—and yet perhaps it were better not."

"Thou art right, sister of mine—poor Josina!" and with a sigh that told its own little story, the earl paused.

"A religious life certainly never seemed to be her vocation; and yet I pray God that she is happy. How now?" he added, on hearing his followers wind up the the wheels of their hacques by the spanners (as they were named) which were attached to the locks by small chains; "what dost thou hear Gilzean?"

"Footsteps, my lord."

"The echoes of our own, perhaps; but where?"

* Josina Henrison was prioress of the Dominicans, at the Sciennes, near Edinburgh, in the time of James V.

"Behind; to be forewarned is to be forearmed."

Lady Jane clung to her brother's arm, and drew her hood closer over her face. They were now in a most lonely part of the road. Above them, about a hundred and fifty yards up the hill, towered the Convent of St. Mary, with its high black walls and waving willows; below them, on the left, the lights of Holyrood were twinkling like wildfire, in the hollow far off, at the foot of the Craigs. The clouds were flying in masses from west to east, and the tremulous stars looked forth at intervals like red and fiery eyes.

"Turn, my lord!" cried Gilzean, "for armed men are close behind us."

"Armed?"

"Like oursels. 'Odslife! I heard the clink of iron-graith!"

"Let us halt, then. Look to your arms, and extinguish the links; for, if friends, we may proceed together, if foes, we must drive them back. But Jane, in God's name, girl, do not cling to me thus—release my sword-arm;—tush, lassie, dost forget thou art half Seton, half Douglas?"

Over his left shoulder, the earl unsheathed the long weapon with which Roland, partly in frolic, had accoutred him; his two followers wound up their wheel-locks, stood by his side, and peered into the gloom behind. They counted seven dark shadows approaching in the starlight.

"I see steel bonnets and Jedwood staves," said the earl.

"And I, drawn whingers and bent pistolettes. Their lunts are alow," replied Gilzean, meaning that their matches were lighted. "Three to seven!"

"Tush! Gilzean, my good man and true, what mat-

ters that? I will spit the odd four, like so many mavis, on this long rapier."

"Stand and surrender, or you are three dead men!" cried one, through the obscurity.

"Zounds!" said the earl, clenching his sword; "surely I should know that voice."

"And I, too," added Jane, trembling excessively.

"'Tis either the Laird of Redhall, or auld Hornie himsel'!" muttered Gilzean Seton.

"We are right, then—I am discovered at last! and my Lord Advocate comes like a common messenger, the vilest of villains, to arrest me."

"Do you yield, sirs?" asked the same person, who was now within ten yards of them.

"Not to the assassins of Sir Thomas M'Clelland of Bombie!" replied the earl, his heart animated by ferocious joy, while his sister's whole form vibrated with terror. "Keep aside, close to the fauld-dyke, my good sister, and leave us freely to deal with these rascals; the first onset is everything!"

Ashkirk led his sister close to the turf wall of the field which bordered the roadway, and cried to his followers—"Fire! and fire low!"

Gilzean and his comrade levelled their hacques, the wheels revolved like lightning, producing fire by the friction of the pyrite; the combined report of these two handguns resounded at once, and one man fell on the roadway with a wild cry that sank into a hollow groan.

The red flashes of three pistolettes replied; with a thousand reverberations, their echoes died away among the cliffs, and the bullets whistled harmlessly past the ears of the earl and his vassals. With the *cri de guerre* of his family,

"Ashkirk and Set on,"

the gallant noble and his two devoted followers fell bravely on their six adversaries, with whom a close and furious contest ensued.

The earl singled out the leader, and on engaging him, found that he had three others to deal with at the same time, and was thus compelled to act merely on the defensive, a perilous predicament with so unwieldy a weapon. He swayed it with both hands, according to the best rules then in use for handling those ponderous wall-swords, and bent low his head (which was protected by a tempered cabosset of proof) seeking to discover the faces of his adversaries, but all seemed blackness. They were *masked*. Red sparks flew in showers from their swords, and the sudden emission of more than one cry of pain acquainted the earl, that the few thrusts which he ventured to give had proved successful.

"Lord earl, yield up your weapon!" cried the clear full voice of Redhall. Jane, as she cowered by the wall, recognised it, and uttered a low cry of terror. "Yield!—yield!"

"To thee?" said Ashkirk, with a scornful laugh. "May eternal execration lie upon me if I do!"

"Traitor, thou shalt rue this dearly!" replied the other, wrathfully; "charge me your pistolettes again," he said to his followers, "and make service surely!"

Ashkirk replied by a tremendous back-handed blow, that would infallibly have cut the speaker in two; but he sprang back nimbly, and by the fury of his stroke, the earl overstruck himself so far, that before he could recover his guard, six vigorous hands were upon him, as many weapons gleamed darkly at his throat, and then, for the first time, he discovered that both his faithful followers were slain. Rising to his full height, and towering above his capturers, he endea-

voured to throw them from him ; but his vast strength failed ; for, fearing to let him free, eager to avenge the wounds he had inflicted, and more passionately eager to serve their lord, whom (lawless and savage as they were) they loved better than life, and animated, no doubt, by the bribes which had purchased their secrecy and services, the followers of Redhall hung upon the hands and throat of the furious earl like blood-hounds.

In a moment he was hurled to the earth, and pinioned hand and tongue, for Nichol Birrel tore off his steel cap and forced over his head one of those iron gags called in Scotland a pair of branks. Shaped not unlike a royal crown, this ignominious fetter was composed of four cross hoops, which enclosed the head by springing from an iron ring that encircled the neck, and was furnished with a steel plate for entering the mouth, and forcibly holding down the tongue. With his strong and regular teeth set firm as a vice, the unfortunate noble resisted long this last and deadly insult, but, unhappily, Sanders Screw, the torturer of the High Court, was among his adversaries. Being well practised in his profession, this daring ruffian thrust his thumbs behind the ears of the earl, and thus brutally compelled him to open his mouth. The gag was immediately forced in, and was held there by a padlock at the back of his neck.

The moment this was accomplished, four men raised him by the legs and arms, and bore him off towards the town ; their wounded comrade followed, while the sixth remained with Redhall.

" Assist me to sweep away these carrion," said he, pointing to the bodies that lay on the road, with the blood yet oozing from their wounds ; " in that field the

corn is high, and they will feed the crows as well there as hanging on the gibbet at St. Giles Grange."

The bodies of the two Setons were raised upon the fauld-dyke, but the heart of Redhall was too fiercely excited to feel even a shudder as he and Dobbie flung them far among the ripening grain, where they lay concealed, until found reduced to skeletons by the terrified reapers in the harvest of that year, as an old diary of the period informs us.

"Now, away, for we have not a moment to lose, and this traitor lord and dame must byde with me! Quick—quick! for I hear shouts and footsteps!"

Lady Jane, who had clung for support to the turf-wall of the road during this furious conflict, which just terrified her (but only in the same degree that a fisticuff battle might scare a lady of the present day, who is all unused to see the flash of steel), uttered shriek after shriek when her brother was beaten down, and she saw no less than six armed men struggling above him. Believing that they were busy with their poniards, she rushed wildly forward to interpose, to save or to die with him; when suddenly she was seized by one who sheathed his sword, and threw his arms around her.

"My brother! oh, my brother! Who are you that have dared to do this, and who that dare to grasp me thus? Cowards—cowards! I am the Lady Jane Seton! Oh, misery! misery! my brother! my brother! Oh, thou who wert so good, so kind, so brave—my mother—oh, my mother—and they have slain him!"

She uttered a shrill cry, and covered her face with her hands on seeing him borne away; she muttered to herself faintly and incoherently; for though she did not swoon, she was perfectly passive, for horror and grief had prostrated all her faculties, and she hung heavily in

the arms of the tall masked man, who was no other than Sir Adam Otterburn.

The fury which had animated him during the conflict now passed away as he pressed her to his breast, where a glow of another kind began to kindle. Though he deemed there was contamination in the ruffian's touch, he was glad to crave the assistance of Dobbie, as he bore her away towards the town; but they had barely reached the southern or back gate of the Redhall Lodging (as his mansion was named), when the steps of men were heard rapidly approaching from the direction of the palace. Sunk deeply in the strong and fortified wall which bounded the Canongate on the south, and was overshadowed by a group of venerable chesnuts, this gate was very much concealed and secluded.

It was barely closed upon the whole party, when three men passed with drawn swords.

They were Sir Roland Vipont and his two friends, the captain and lieutenant of the King's Foot Guard.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CASTLE OF INCHKEITH.

"*Prometheus*. The tyrant is but young in power, and deems
His palace inaccessible to sorrow.
But bear him this defiance : I have seen
Two hated despots hurled from the same throne,
And in him I shall soon behold a third,
Flung thence to an irreparable ruin.
"*Mercury*. It was thy proud rebellion brought thee here,
Else thou hadst from calamity been free."

HALF-AN-HOUR after the Earl and Lady Jane had set out for the convent of St. Katherine, old Father St. Bernard departed ; and, after failing to convince the countess that her belief in omens and predictions was altogether at variance with the principles of their faith, (arguments which she always silenced by reminding him, that he was one of those who had seen the spectre which appeared to James IV. in St. Katherine's aisle at Linlithgow,) he departed to his dwelling among the houses of the prebendaries at St. Giles, and bestowed his solemn and usual benediction—"Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum"—on Janet Seton, the sister of Gilzean, and all the kneeling household, as he departed.

The dark-haired Sybil, the fair Marion Logan, and the stately figure of Alison Hume, were all bent over a

large embroidery frame, where they pretended to be working (for the old-fashioned industry of the countess kept all busy about her), but in reality they were conversing intently on the late ball at the palace, and all their white necks and glossy ringlets shone in the light of the candelabrum, as they were grouped like the three Graces together. Reclined in an easy chair, with her feet on a tabourette, and her face so buried in her vast coif, that her nose (which was somewhat prominent) alone was visible, the countess was spelling over the pages of "The joyeuse Historie of the great Conqueror and excellent Prince, King Arthur, sometyme King of the noble realm of England, with the Chivalry of the Round Table."

It was one of those old black-letter emanations from William Caxton's press, which the abbot of Westminster erected for him, at the Almonry, in the parish of St. Margaret's, London. Her husband, Earl John, found it when storming the English castle of Etal, and had given it to his confessor, as a book of magic; for to the unlettered warrior of the fifteenth century, its strange black characters seemed the very work of hell, and he had never touched the volume, save with his gauntlets on.

However, Father St. Bernard had taught the countess that it was merely the romance of an old Welsh monk, and, deeply immersed therein, she had just reached the account of that dreadful battle fought by Arthur against Nero and King Lot of Orkney, who was so foully deceived by the wicked enchanter Merlin, and drawn into that strife around the castle Terrible, where Sir Kaye the seneschal and Sir Hervis de Revel performed such deeds as none ever achieved but knights of the Round Table; and where twelve valiant kings were

lain, and buried in Stephen's church at Camelot. The countess, we say, had just reached this interesting point, and believing it all implicitly, was crossing herself at the contemplation of such a slaughter, when her favourite tabby, which was seated on the table, with its prodigious whiskers bristling, and its sleepy eyes winking at the wax candles, sneezed violently, which made her cross herself again three several times.

A dog howled mournfully in the yard.

The countess laid aside her book, took off her barnacles, and began to think.

"All the dogs in Linlithgow howled on the day James IV. was killed at Flodden!"

The good old lady was seriously discomposed, and she was just feeling for an *Agnus Dei*, which Father St. Bernard had given her to keep away the nightmare, when Janet her tirewoman, and Sabrino the page, with his poniard unsheathed, rushed into the room. The former looked pale as death, and was almost breathless; the visage of the latter was a ghastly blue; his eyes were glaring with alarm; he held one finger on his lips, and pointed downwards with another to the staircase, where now a sudden uproar of voices mingling with the clash of swords was heard.

"Oh! madam! madam! my puir dear lady! it's a' a' owre—its a' owre noo! They are coming! they are coming!" cried Janet, with a most prolonged "Oh," of grief.

"Then my four omens this day have not been for nocht!" said the countess, rising up to the full extent of her great stature; while the three young ladies rushed to her side like startled doves; "but speak, ye foolish woman, speak! Who are coming?"

"They are coming to arrest you, and we are a' lost!"

lost ! lost ! Oh, the hands of dule and death are spread this nicht owre the Setons o' Ashkirk." And seizing the hands of her mistress, the woman kissed them, and then throwing herself on her knees, buried her face in her scarlet curtsey, rocking her body to and fro, and exclaiming with that noisy grief so common to her class, " Oh Archibald—my nurseling—my son, and mair than my son (for thou art *the* head of the name)—thy curly pow will sune be on the Netherbow, wi' the gleds and the corbies croaking owre it !"

The countess trembled and grew pale ; but drawing herself proudly up (and her height was as towering as her aspect was majestic), she said calmly,

" Let them come ! I have seen my father hewn down before my eyes, and I have heard the clang of steel upon my hearth ere now. Let them come—they are welcome ; but more welcome would they be," she added, with an almost savage flash in her eyes, " if I were among my father's race in Douglasdale !"

While she spoke, the heavy arras concealing the doorway was raised, and a number of sturdy legs cased in red stockings, shoes garnished with enormous red rosettes, and the butt-ends of partisans, became visible. Then the Albany herald, a dark and stately man, about forty years of age, clad in his gorgeous tabard, carrying his plumed cap in one hand and a paper in the other, entered the room, bowing almost to the ribbons at his knees. The Bute pursuivant who accompanied him held back the arras, and revealed four halberdiers of the provost clad in the city livery, blue gaberdines laced upon the seams with yellow, and ten men of the cardinal's guard, wearing the colours of Bethune, and the arms of the archbishopric of St. Andrew's worked upon the sleeves and breasts of their doublets. They were

armed with steel caps, swords and partisans, but remained respectfully without the apartment. One was bleeding profusely from a wound on the cheek, having had a tough encounter with the armed servants below.

"Herald," said the countess, haughtily, "if you seek the earl, my son, I swear to you that he is not here!"

The herald hesitated.

"By the forty blessed altars of St. Giles, I swear to you that he is not!"

"Madam, I do not seek the earl," said the herald, with the utmost respect; "but I have here an order from his eminence the cardinal as lord chancellor, and in the name of the king, for your arrest."

"Mine!" rejoined the countess, thanking God in her inmost heart that it was not her unwary son they sought; "for my arrest! on what charge, herald!"

"Treason: the resetting of rebels, and——" he paused.

"What more wouldst thou dare to say?"

"Suspicion of sorcery, or teaching thy daughter sorcery."

"Sorcery?" reiterated the countess, gazing at him with terrified eyes, and speaking almost with the voice of a dying person; while the three girls, who clung to her robe, uttered a cry of alarm. "Darest thou have said so much to my father, Sir Archibald Douglas, of Kilspindie?"

"I would have said so to any man under God, whom the king commanded me to arrest."

"But to a helpless woman?"

"I am in the king's service, madam."

"Thou art a Hamilton!" said the countess, scornfully.

"I am, madam," replied the herald, proudly; "I am

John Hamilton, of Darnagaber—a gentleman of the house of Arran.”

“I thought as much,” said the countess, curtsyeing scornfully again to conceal how her knees bent under her; “the gentlemen of that house are thick as locusts now.”

“Do not look on me thus, madam,” said the herald, with dignity; “I am a gentleman of coat-armour, and brook my lands as my forbears won them, by captainrie and the sword.”

“Allace!” said the countess, as she obtained a glimpse of the armed men; “what new dishonour is this? why am I arrested by the cardinal’s guards, who are but mere kirk vassals?”

“Sir John Forrester and the lieutenant of the king’s guard, could not be found: besides, madam, they are the assured friends of the master of the ordnance, who——”

“And thou, John Hamilton of Darnagaber, art thou not ashamed to execute these orders?” said the bold and beautiful Sybil, fixing her keen black eyes, with an expression of unutterable scorn, on the calm face of the herald.

“Noble damsel,” he answered, quietly, “I have said that I am in the king’s service, and obey but the constituted authorities of the land; yet I do so, deploring from my soul this cruel and sad necessity.”

“Sorcery!” said the countess, speaking to herself; “by my father’s bones! Sorcery—oh! my God!—sorcery! Woe worth the deviser of this scheme—for a scheme it is, which the swords of Ashkirk and Angus shall unravel.” She added, tying on her hood and cloak of sables with trembling hands, “Alison Hume, do thou look to my jewels and other valuables; they

lie in that strong cabinet; but, Sir Herald, what of these three noble ladies, my guests and kinswomen; they——”

“Are not included in the warrant.”

“Then they shall remain with my daughter here.”

“Your daughter, lady,” said the herald, confusedly; “nay, they must be sent to their families under safe escort: my own sons, who serve in the king’s guard, shall convey them with all honour to their homes. Be easy on that score, madam.”

“But thou, my doo—Sybil?”

“I,” sobbed Sybil, “oh, dear madam, I go with you.”

“To ward?”

“To death, madam—my second mother! for such indeed you have been.”

“My puir bairn, thou hast nowhere else to go; for thy father is in exile, and Hamilton of Dalserf holds his castle and barony of Kilspindie.”

“Lady Ashkirk, where is your daughter, the Lady Jane?” said the herald, unwilling to say that his cruel warrant included her also.

“She is at the convent of Sieuna, where, I pray you, to let her hear these heavy tidings gently.” The herald bowed with increasing gravity. “But whither go we now—to the castle, of course?”

“Nay, madam, to the tower of Inchkeith.”

“A sure place, and a strong too! The high rocks and the deep waves were not required surely to fence in a feeble auld body like mine. Be it so—I am ready! Oh, for a score of those good men and true, that my husband led to the battle of Linlithgow! Where now are all the gallant and the generous hearts of other days?”

"God hath taken them to himself, madam," replied the herald, whose eyes moistened.

"Your pardon, sir; I knew not that I spoke aloud."

"Lady Ashkirk, your husband spared my life on that unfortunate field. When the Master of Glencairn, with a thousand Douglas lances, forded the Avon, and cut the column of Bardowie to pieces, I had there been slain but for your husband's valour. I owe his memory a debt of gratitude—trust to my kindness. Horses are in waiting to convey you to Leith; and I have orders to see that your household property is every way respected. All lights and fires are to be extinguished—all bolts and bars made fast, and I place my seal upon the doorway."

"God be with thee, Alison, and thee, my bonnie Marion. Fare-ye-well, my bairns; and thou, too, Janet, my leal servitor—"

"This woman may attend your ladyship."

"Sir, I thank you," said the countess, but Janet could only weep, and she did so with great vociferation.

The herald took the hand of the countess respectfully, she leaned on the arm of Sybil, the sable page raised her long train, the guards fell back to salute her as she past, and, amid the sound of lamentation above, below, and around her, she descended the long stone staircase of her mansion, a prisoner.

Situated three miles from Leith, in the middle of the Firth of Forth, the ancient tower of Inchkeith (which was demolished in 1567) occupied the summit of that beautiful isle, on a rock one hundred and eighty feet above the water. It was of vast strength and great antiquity, for it was the *Caer Guidi* of the venerable Bede. Well defended by cannon and a barbican wall,

which bore the royal arms of Scotland, it was deemed a place of such importance that the Queen Regent, Mary of Guise, and the French ambassador, John de Montluc, the learned Bishop of Valence paid it a visit twelve years after the date of this our history. Inaccessible on all sides, save one, this island is fertile on its summit, and is watered by many springs that flow from its rocks, which are literally swarming with grey rabbits, and fierce Norwegian rats.

The night was dark, but guided by a beacon of turf and tar-barrels that blazed on the summit of the tower to direct them, (for the cardinal and lord advocate had provided for everything,) eight mariners of the admiral Sir Robert Barton's ship pulled sturdily across the broad river towards Inchkeith. Few stars were visible, and a chill wind from the German Sea blew coldly across the broad bosom of the open estuary.

The island, with the light gleaming like a red star on its summit, loomed darkly afar off in the distance, and seemed to rise in height at every stroke of the oars. The countess was seated in the stern beside the anxious Albany herald, whose dread of a rescue made him lose no time in executing the orders of the lord advocate.

The seamen bent to their oars in sullen silence, and under their fur caps and shaggy eyebrows gave hostile glances from time to time at the countess, for the whisper of sorcery was, in those days of superstition, more than enough to steel every heart against her. Full of her own sad and bitter thoughts, she was unaware of this, and sat proudly and erect, with the cold wind blowing on her fine but pallid features. Within the last two hours she seemed to have grown much older. Her nose had become pinched, her cheeks haggard, but her un-

moistened eyes were full of fire; for indignation and studied revenge,

“Had locked the source of softer woe;
And burning pride, and high disdain,
Forbade the rising tear to flow.”

The graceful head of Sybil reclined on her shoulder; she wept bitterly; and the countess, who thought of her absent daughter with more fear and sorrow than for her son, whose daring character she knew well, pressed the orphan heiress of Kilspondie to her breast.

She knew not the depth or the daring of Redhall's plot; that her daughter was included in the same warrant, and that with him alone lay the power of opening or closing for ever the door of the prisons which were now to enclose them.

Two torches which were borne by two of the Cardinal Guard (for this prelate had found a band of pikemen necessary for his protection against the assassins constantly employed by Henry VIII. for his destruction) cast a lurid glare upon the boat's crew and the seething water, as they streamed in the night wind; on the steel caps and glancing weapons of the soldiers, the wiry beards and swarthy visages of the seamen; on the herald's splendid tabard; on the black, shining visage of Sabrino, and on the reddened waves of the Forth, which became crested with foam as they neared the rocks of the isle, where they were seen dashing like snow over the jagged reefs of the Long Craig.

The torchlight, the moaning breeze, the lonely water, and the dark and gloomy sky, all combined to give a wild and picturesque aspect to the whole scene; which must infallibly have impressed the countess, and still more so the romantic Sybil, had they been less occupied with their own thoughts. Yet one could not repress a

shudder, or the other a faint cry, when at times the frail boat plunged down into the trough of the dark waves, or rose on their summits, with the broad blades of the weather oars flourishing in the air.

The jarring of the boat against the rude rocks of the creek on the south-west, the only landing-place, roused the countess from her reverie, and she shuddered still more to see, frowning stupendously above her, the strong square tower of the Inch, perched on the very verge of "the Climpers," as the fishermen name those basaltic cliffs, against which the waves are ever rolling in one eternal sheet of foam.

The sheer rocks of the creek are perpendicular as a wall, and are fully sixty feet high, while those of the tower are exactly thrice that height. In this narrow fissure the troops of the queen-mother landed in 1549, to drive out the English and Germans who had lodged themselves there; when Monsieur de Biron had half his helmet driven into his head by the shot of one arquebuse; Monsieur Desbois, his standard-bearer, was slain by another, while the Cavaliere Gaspare Strozzi, captain of the Italians, and many more, fell before the English were cut to pieces.

"Oh, my winsome bairn—my daughter, Jeanie—when again shall I ever behold thee?" exclaimed the poor old countess, as she stretched her trembling hands in the direction of the city, which being then buried in the gloom and obscurity of midnight, was totally invisible. "When shall I behold again thee? But, till *then*, may that blessed Virgin whose wondrous sanctity our Lord hath honoured with sae many miracles, keep a watch over thee!"

"Assuredly, there is no witchcraft here!" thought the Albany herald.

Rolled up in a warm cloak of *couleur-du-roi*, Sir James Hamilton, of Barncleugh, captain of the tower, was ready at the landing-place with a few soldiers and torch-bearers to receive them. Attended by these and the herald, Lady Ashkirk, leaning on the arms of Sybil and Janet, with the taciturn Sabrino following, ascended the zig-zag path which leads into the beautiful and verdant little valley that lies in the centre of the island, and is sheltered from the cold wind by basaltic cliffs on the east and west.

Above them rose the dark outline of the tower, with the large red balefire sputtering on its summit to direct the homeward bound ships of Leith.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FORTUNATE SWORD THRUST.

"Adew Edinburgh! that heich triumphant toun,
Within quhose bounds richt blytheful I have been;
Of trew merchants, the rout of this regioun,
Most ready to ressave court, king, and queen.
Thy policie and justice may be seen.
Were devotioun, wysedom, and honestie,
With credence tint, they might be found in thee."

LINDESAY OF THE MOUNT.

IN total and happy ignorance of the events of the past night, Roland awoke next morning. The dawn was struggling through an atmosphere of mist and fog. Though roused by the tramp of feet and the lumbering roll of artillery wheels, he would fain have slept a little longer, for the palace clock was only striking four; but he sprang out of bed with the resolution of a soldier, and found old Lintstock all accoutred in his sleeved habergeon, with gourgerin, salade, sword, dagger, and priming-horn, ready to dress and arm him, a process which use and wont made wonderfully short, when we consider that Roland was to be encased in a complete suit of plate armour. It was elaborately gilded and engraved with legends of the Scottish saints, for such was the superstition of the age, that such devices were deemed a pro-

tection greater even than a coat of tempered mail. His helmet was surmounted by the crest of the Viponts, a swan's head rising from a ducal coronet, all of frosted silver, and above it floated his plume. A belt of perfumed and embroidered leather sustained his sword and dagger, and in his hand he carried a gilt baton as captain or master of the ordnance. For breakfast, a slice of beef and a pot of wine from the relics of the supper sufficed both him and Lintstock, who said—

“Now that old bundle of roguery, who keeps the *Cross and Gillstoup*, will be ready to curse himself wi' bell, book and candle, when he finds we're awa'; and he may whistle on the wind for payment.”

“Till I return, say, I pray you.”

“Of course; we'll pick up some braw things by way o' contribution. The king's soldiers, gentlemen of the sword, maun live, and live wi' honour.”

“Is the earl here?”

“The earl!”

“Of course; he is going with us.”

“To look for himself?”

“Surely—an excellent joke; I meant to take him, where in reality none expect to find him; for I tell thee, Lintstock, this march westward is all a trick of mine enemies at court, to banish me from the king's presence and this good town of Edinburgh, when they know I would give my ears to remain in it.”

“Aha!” said Lintstock, giving under his helmet a shrewd Scots wink with his solitary eye; “I can see into a millstone as far as my neighbours; but, certes! I saw na this.”

Roland yawned below his visor as he faced the cold breeze that swept from the sea round Arthur's Seat,

and gave a casual glance at the hundred soldiers of the guard whom his friend Leslie was arraying with their arquebuses, rests and bandoliers; and another at his sixteen gunners, who were all stout men in steel bonnets and jacks, armed with swords and gloves of plate, and who were tracing the horses, and preparing two very handsome French culverins for the march. These were two of those fifty-six beautiful pieces of brass cannon, presented by Francis I. to his daughter Magdalene on her becoming queen of Scotland, and which were long after known in the arsenal by his cypher which was engraved on them.

Like all men of the old school (for they have existed in every age, and every age has had "a good old time" to regret), Lintstock was scrutinising these cannon narrowly with his one eye, and commenting from time to time in sorrow and with anger on the various innovations they exhibited, and the multitude of ornamental rings which encircled the first and second reinforce, the chase and muzzle of each; and he could not repress a groan at the trunnions with which they were supported on the carriages, and the curved dolphins, which served for mounting and dismounting them. Thrawn-mouthed Mow, which had knocked out his left eye by her splinters, had been blessedly free (as he remembered) of all such useful ornaments, and lay on her stock like one log lying on another.

"By my holy dame! but this dings Dunse!" said the old fellow, shaking his battered morion; "this world will no do now, for an auld body like me; and the suner I march to my lang hame the better. Gude-sake! what have they made o' the aim frontlets?"

"Sic auld-fashioned things are no needed, ye grumb-

ling carle," said a young cannoneer; "especially when the trunnions are so placed, and the quoins are so low."

"Ye are but a bairn; trunnions! we levelled six and twenty pieces on Flodden field, and devil a trunnion was among them a'. We were but ten thousand that day, and the Lord Surrey had six and twenty thousand under his banner: but say nae mair o' Flodden, for I feel as if this corslet would burst when I think o't!"

Roland paid no attention to the old soldier's complaints; he was intently observing a man who was muffled in a sad-coloured mantle, and leaned against the wall of James the Fifth's tower, watching the preparations for the departure of this little band. The hour was so early that no other person was visible about the palace, save the arquebussiers on duty in the archways.

"Yonder is either Redhall, or his friend with the horns," thought Roland. "Now what errand can bring my lord advocate abroad at this early hour. Ah, rascal! more than probable it is to thee I owe this untimorous march, without bidding once adieu to her who loves me so well."

Being somewhat curious to know wherefore this man, whom he knew to be his enemy, was lounging there, Roland walked slowly and deliberately towards him.

A fatality attended Redhall this morning.

Lady Jane and the earl, her brother, were both now safe in his house—a strong edifice, which, if properly garrisoned, might have stood a siege of all their faction; and there we shall, ere long, pay them a visit. The earl he valued at a thousand merks; but his sister he prized more than all the wealth of the Indies. Restless and anxious, this arch-conspirator could not feel sure of his capture, while so enterprising a pair of comrades as

Vipont and Leslie were in Edinburgh : and burning with impatience to see them fairly depart (on an expedition from which he was resolved they should never return), he had never undressed or been in bed, and had now come to observe if they marched, before the tidings of the countess's arrest, and the disappearance of her daughter, spread throughout the city.

In those stirring times, the most daring outrages were esteemed but casual occurrences, and were thought little more of than a shower of rain. A day never passed in which a dozen of castles were not stormed, or petty conflicts fought, in various parts of the country ; and the good folks of Edinburgh were so much accustomed to the clash of swords, and seeing men run each other through the body for no better reason than because their worthy fathers had done the same before them, that the din of steel on the Hiegait was deemed scarcely worth raising one's window for. Ten thousand clansmen might fight a battle now and then in the wilds of Ross or Argyle, and might even burn Inverness by way of variety ; and two months after, the news thereof would reach Holyrood. The energy and ability of James V. and the cardinal, established the Courts of Session and Justiciary for the repression of such outrages ; but these tribunals did not prevent the lord high treasurer from carrying off an heiress, a ward of the crown, and marrying her, *bongré malgré*, to his son ; while the next generation saw without surprise the lord high chancellor murdering the secretary of state under the very eyes of royalty ; consequently, the reader must not imagine that it was any qualm of fear or conscience either that disturbed Redhall, and banished sleep from his eyes. No ; restless exultation alone kept him awake. The time to visit his fair captive had not yet

come; the first paroxysm of her grief and anger had to pass; and then to cool his excitement, and see his rival fairly *en route* for Douglasdale, he had walked forth with the first peep of dawn.

Who that saw his grave and thoughtful face, and knew his stern and lofty character, would have imagined that amid the sea of vast political matters in which he and the cardinal were immersed, and amid the busy whirl of their tumultuous public duties, gentle love had found a passage to his iron heart? An infernal joy had now kindled a new glow within it; and there was a wild gleam in his eyes, and a feverish flush on his cheek, as Roland Vipont approached him.

Sir Adam Otterburn, of Redhall, says an old historian, was one of the handsomest men of his time; but notwithstanding that he knew this well, the aspect of Vipont in his armour, blending the perfect ease of the cavalier with the loftiness of a true soldier, kindled in his bosom a glow of jealousy, not unmixed with envy, and anger that he had been discovered in his lurking-place.

Turning haughtily, he was about to walk slowly away towards the great doorway of the abbey church, when the voice of Roland arrested him with more hauteur than policy.

"Ho! Sir Adam! you are abroad betimes this morning."

Redhall turned and bowed with a cold smile in his eyes, the ferocious expression of which he vainly endeavoured to conceal.

"I crave pardon for interrupting your lordship's morning reveries, or orisons," said Roland, with somewhat of mischief in his eye; "but, 'Odzounds! you must know that I permit no man to pass or avoid me

without a pretty weighty reason; and your lordship hath just so served me."

"'S life sir! dost thou think that I will give any reasons to one who queries me in such a tone?"

"I did not *thou* thee," replied Roland, with rising wrath.

"Nor did I seek thee," rejoined Redhall; and then they paused a moment, and gazed at each other with eyes of hatred: the soldier with the expression of a lion, the lawyer with that of a serpent. In his secret soul each nourished a storm of vengeance that longed to break forth; but Redhall's was almost subdued by his giddy exultation, and the reflection that Jane Seton was now, legally and illegally, so doubly in his power. "Nor did I seek thee," he continued, "and had I on mine armour, this insolence of first addressing me had assuredly been chastised."

"Mansworn dog!" exclaimed Roland, trembling with passion; "thou who cloakest thy cowardice under the wing of this new-fangled court," he added, seizing Redhall by his short-peaked beard, and almost rending it from his chin, "am I thine inferior, that *thou* shouldst acknowledge me first?"

Redhall's bonnet fell off; his dark eyes gleamed with rage; his moustachios seemed to bristle, and his black hair waved about his face like the mane of a Scottish bull. He could only utter a cry of fury, as he unsheathed his sword, regardless of the place, and that he was totally without armour; while Roland was in full mail for active service.

"Come on," he cried, hoarsely, for rage had deprived him almost of speech; "come on—thou—thou—on your guard! quick! quick! or I am through you!" Roland hesitated.

"It were a coward's deed to slay thee," he replied, unsheathing his long Italian sword in self-defence, and feeling its point with the leather palm of his gauntlet; "though, perhaps, it is owing to thee, and such as thee alone, that my sword now wins more blows than bonnet-pieces in the king's service."

Redhall rushed to the assault, and both their swords became engaged from point to hilt; but Roland acted strictly on the defensive. He knew that to slay Redhall would be both dangerous and dishonourable; while if the reverse happened, Redhall would gain immortal honour at court, and run no secondary risk. Vipont was a poor soldier of fortune, who lived by knight-service and the sword; while Redhall, was a powerful baron, allied to many warlike nobles, and a high officer of state.

Roland parried one *counter-en-carte* so close to his throat that it would certainly have slain him where the gorget met the cuirass; and then, finding that he had to do with no ordinary swordsman, he endeavoured to twist his own rapier in his adversary's, and lock-in; but Redhall met his blade in time; it glided along his own like lightning, and then they both retired a step.

In the palace yard the trumpet sounded for the march; as Roland became impatient his anger rose, and he replied to four terrible thrusts by one which pierced the shoulder-blade of his adversary, and hurled him to the earth, breaking his sword like a crystal wand as he fell.

In the sequel it will be seen how fortunate this thrust was for Jane Seton.

"Now, hold thee, Vipont!" cried Leslie, through his barred helmet, as he ran up at that moment, "by all the powers thou hast slain the king's advocate!"

"Be easy," said Roland, smiling, as he carefully sheathed his sword; "dost think the devil dies so readily?"

"'S death! art thou not mad to be fencing here, like a French sword-player, when our trumpets are sounding?" said Leslie, as he assisted Redhall to rise. "You are not wounded, my lord, I hope?"

"'Tis only a stab like a button-hole—pshaw! I will make a sure account of it," said Redhall, wrapping his cloak about him, and striking the hilt of his sword into the top of the empty sheath.

"A good day to thee, thou hypocrite and assassin in black taffeta," said Roland, leaping on his caparisoned horse, which Lintstock led up at that moment.

"Farewell, thou ruffian and cutthroat in plate and cloth of gold," replied Redhall, in the same tone of fierce irony.

"I will remember thy politeness, Sir Adam."

"I will not forget thine, Sir Roland;—adieu."

And thus they separated, with bent brows, and eyes and hearts full of fire and hatred.

CHAPTER XX.

THE BLACK PAGE.

"Ha! there was a fatal evidence.

All's over now, indeed!

The morning tide shall sweep his corpse to sea,
And hide all memory of this stern night's work."

SCOTT.

LEANING on the arm of Sybil, and attended by Sir James Hamilton of Barncleugh, the Albany herald and their followers, we left the countess ascending the little valley which lies in the centre of Inchkeith. They proceeded in silence, for the path was somewhat perilous; the early morning was yet grey, though the eastern sky and ocean were fast brightening with the coming day. A cold wind swept over the bosom of the waters that girdled in the isle. About the middle of the valley a cleft in the rocks was reached, through which the pathway passed at direct right angles with that they had hitherto pursued; and from thence they continued to ascend, until they reached the summit of those precipices which, from the water, seemed to be inaccessible, and where the iron gate of the barbican stood, with a moss-grown Scottish lion carved in stone above it.

The light had been rapidly increasing as they ascended, and now behind bars of golden cloud, the broad

round morning sun rose red and gloriously from his bed in the German ocean ; and then indeed did the beautiful river, that from Highland hills rolls down on yellow sands, seem one vast tide of molten gold flowing to the dark blue sea ; and beautifully in the warm sunshine were that bright blue and brighter gold mingling afar off in the estuary.

The morning smoke and the humid vapours of the past night, yet veiled the close dense masses of the capital ; but the spire of St. Giles, and the embattled tower of king David, the loftiest summit of the castle, whereon the St. Andrew's cross was waving, were visible above the gauzy mist, that veiled the glens below.

Clad in the brightest hues of summer, on one side lay Fife, its long expanse of sand studded by busy towns and red-tiled villages, baronial towers and ancient churches, its bold promontories jutting into the majestic river, and its beautiful mountains rising behind. On the other lay the three Lothians, with all their ripening fields and dark-green woods, the lonely cone of Soltra, the lonelier Lammermuirs, and the undulating sweep of the far-stretching Pentlands, a long blue waving chain of heath-clad mountain, that dwarfed the lesser hills, and threw the wooded cliffs of Corstorphine, the Calton, the castled rock, and even proud Arthur's basaltic brow, into comparative obscurity. So deceiving is distance, that this chain of peaks seemed to start abruptly from the very margin of the river ; and Leith, with all its dense old Flemish wynds and closes, its marts and shipping, St. Mary's spire and old St. Anthony's tower, seemed to nestle at their feet.

Westward of the isle lay that armed fleet which had so recently arrived from France, under the pennon of Admiral Sir Robert Barton, brother of that other gallant

Admiral Sir Andrew Barton, who, when returning from fighting the Portuguese, with two solitary ships, was waylaid by Lord Howard and the whole English fleet in the Downs, where he was slain by a cannon-ball.

The dawn of day, which had displayed this magnificent panorama to the countess and Lady Sybil, had also revealed the sable visage of Sabrino to Sir James Hamilton of Barncleugh, who had never seen or heard of a black man before ; so he preceded the party, in some perturbation, signing the cross as fast as if all St. Anthony's imps were behind him, and marvelling at so hideous a masque.

"Welcome to the tower of Inchkeith, ladies," said he, turning round, and raising his bonnet at the bar-bican gate.

The countess replied, "Heaven grant I may soon return the welcome in my own house, Sir James."

"Though I *am* a Hamilton?" replied the knight, with a smile.

"Oh, yes ; for these dire feuds begin to weary me."

"Ah ! old fox," muttered the castellan under his beard ; "because thy nose is below the water now. Had we lost, and the Douglasses won the battle of Linlithgow," said he with a smile, "I doubt much if the feud had been tiresome to the Lady Ashkirk."

"She had not been *here* to-day," replied the countess ; "but how—what does this mean?" she added, with some asperity, on seeing that two soldiers, in obedience to a sign from Barncleugh, crossed their pikes before Sabrino, to prevent his entering the tower.

"It means, madam, that this black thing, quhilk in visage so closely resembles the promoter of all evil, cannot enter here."

"Sir James of Barncleugh," said the Albany herald, interposing, "he is the countess's page."

"Page! ugh! I like not to look upon him. I would do much for thee, John of Darnagaber, who art mine own natural born clansman, and more for the widow of gallant Earl John of Ashkirk (a Seton and Douglas man though he was), but, by my holy dame! this black devil, whom I have no order to receive, shall not enter the tower of Inchkeith, that is flat!"

"Sir James Hamilton," said the countess, with dignity, "do be merciful, and spare us the humiliation of entreaty. This poor black boy is faithful and gentle, kind and attached to me as a spaniel, and assuredly he will die if separated from me; for he is, I know, an object of abhorrence to the ignorant and the vulgar."

At this remark, which was unintentional, the commander of the island gave her a furious look, and cocked his bonnet over his right eye.

"Madam," said he, coldly, "you will excuse me; I am but a blunt knight of James III., yet I would never forgive myself if anything evil occurred."

"Kiss the hand of this gentleman, Sabrino," said Sybil, "and he will admit you."

Sabrino was a mute, or nearly so; by some law of his barbarous native land, his tongue had been cut out near the root; thus he could only utter certain terrible and apparently unintelligible sounds, and when doing so, opened his wide mouth to its utmost extent, revealing two rows of sharp teeth, and the black remains of his mutilated tongue, which he lolled about within the cavity in a manner which, to say the least of it, was very appalling. The poor terrified black was beginning to mutter his thanks in this extraordinary fashion, and

gradually approached the Lord of Barncleugh, when the latter sprang back, with alarm in his eyes, and his hand on his sword.

"Get thee behind me, Satan !" he exclaimed. "Away! I will not be touched by thee. My hand? nay, I will hew it off first. Hence, imp of darkness, for may I never see God, if thou abidest in this castle for a moment, or in this island for an hour."

To overcome his prejudices, even if the countess had stooped to flatter them, seemed impossible; therefore, she gave the herald her hand to kiss, thanked him for his kind courtesy, entrusted him with messages for her daughter concerning certain necessities they required, for she doubted not her residence on the isle would be a protracted one; and then begging that he would see the poor black page delivered safely to the care of Sir Roland Vipont, of the captain of the guard, or any other of his friends, she entered the tower with Sybil and Janet, their last solitary attendant.

Then the iron gate was closed and barred until the herald's boat should have withdrawn from the island.

A sign from the countess had been sufficient for Sabrino, and with tears and the utterance of many a strange and unearthly lamentation, he followed the herald and Hamilton of Barncleugh, who, after taking each a quaighful from a little keg of whisky that stood in the warder's lodge, descended to the boat; the disobliging castellan going thither partly from fear, and partly from courtesy, to see his friend and the page off together.

"I like this black creature as little as thee," said the herald, "but I have heard Father St. Bernard, when preaching of St. Frumentius of Ethiopia, tell us of a land, a hundred times the size of broad Scotland, where all the tribes were of this sable hue."

"True—and I have seen such a visage on a banner, ere this."

"Morrison of that ilk carrieth three," replied the herald; "I saw them beaten down by the Stewarts of Lennox on that day, by Linlithgow brig. But, remember thee, that my lord advocate wished a strict watch to be kept over this creature."

"Then he should have inserted his name in the warrant of committal to ward. 'Slife! there is an old draw-well in the barbican, where I could have lodged it very well. Though a dour carle, I know Sir Adam Otterburn to be an upright man, and abhorrer of sorcery; and there is in this Seton family much that smelleth sorely of it. Earl John found a book of the black art once when on an English foray, as I have heard, but Redhall——"

"Ah, *he* is a very good man," said the herald, ironically; "descended, indeed, from one of the apostles, by the father's side."

"Which?"

"Judas."

"Beware of thy waggery—he is a severe dispenser of the laws."

"What the devil care I for him, or for the cardinal either, if it cometh to that."

"My friend, my friend!" said Barncleugh giving a furtive glance behind; "assuredly this black thing hath infected thee, for this discourse savoureth fearfully of the new heresy; but I forget that thou art a near kinsman of Patrick Hamilton, the umquhile abbot of Fearn, and so-called martyr."

"Nay, I remember only that I am speaking to a gentleman, Hamilton, and say what I choose."

"Not always a wise proceeding—but here is the boat, cousin."

The mariners, who had been in no way pleased at having Sabrino as a passenger to the isle, and had been mutually feeding each other's fears and prejudices during the herald's absence, were very much discomposed by his returning with the same sable attendant; and on hearing from the cardinal's pikemen that Sir James Hamilton had declined to admit him within the tower, their murmurs became loud and undisguised. The herald shook hands with the knight, and attended by his pursuivant, sprang on board; but when Sabrino attempted to follow, the coxswain, a square-visaged and sturdily-built old fellow, with a long grey beard and shaggy eyebrows, snatched up a boat-hook, and attempted to push off the pinnace; then Sabrino, with one hand on the gunnel, and the other on his poniard, gave him a dark and terrible scowl.

"Awa, awa! thou imp of Satan—hands off, or I will ribroast thee!" cried the coxswain, somewhat alarmed at his own temerity.

"Reeve a rope through his siller ear-rings and tow him overboard," cried one sailor.

"Cast off! cast off!" cried another; "I hae heard o' sicimps that abyde at Cape Non, and eat of ship-broken mariners."

The coxswain raised the iron-shod boathook.

"Hold!" exclaimed the herald, springing forward, but he was too late; it descended like a thunderbolt on the round, woolly head of Sabrino, and he disappeared like a stone in the deep fathomless abyss of the creek. "Dolt!" added the herald, "I have pledged my word of honour for his safety, and thou hast slain him."

"Heed it not, good fellow; I will owe thee a score of bonnet pieces for that," cried Sir James Hamilton, as he sprang up the steep winding pathway that led to-

wards the tower, while the oars dipped into the water, and the boat shot out upon the river, whose waves were dancing brightly in the glow of the cloudless morning.

Before this, the countess and Sybil, overcome by weariness, the grief of the past night, and a total deprivation of sleep, had fallen into a deep slumber in a chamber of the tower above.

The worthy lady of Barncleugh was somewhat of a termagant, which was generally averred to be the principal reason why the good laird her spouse had solicited from the cardinal, and retained, the solitary castellany of Inchkeith. The lady never came into the island, and the laird never went out of it; but consumed the long and dreary days, revelling in the peaceful monotony he now enjoyed, playing chess with his seneschal, and drinking usquebaugh mixed with a small proportion of the brackish spring-water of the isle. A table was placed near the gate of the tower, at a sunny angle of the barbican, on the very verge of those cliffs named the Climpers; and there, with the sea rolling nearly a hundred and eighty feet below, the sea-gulls and the solan geese croaking above them, they passed the summer afternoons, playing chess and drinking, with invincible resolution and impenetrable gravity, till sunset, when the knight was usually borne upstairs, and put to bed, the damp air having stiffened his limbs, as he always declared next day—an assertion which the seneschal (who had his own thoughts on the matter) never dared to deny.

It may easily be supposed that such a castellan was in no way calculated to relieve the tedium, soothe the grief and mortification, or lessen the fears, of the countess and Sybil; for days rolled on and became weeks, and the weeks were approaching a month; and

though the opposite coast and the city, the scene of all their anxieties, were little more than three miles distant, they remained in total and blessed ignorance of all that was passing there.

They seemed to be as utterly forgotten as if they had been in the *oubliettes* of the cardinal.

The countess heard nothing of her daughter, whom she had fully expected to join her; and Sybil learned nothing of her lover; so whether, with the Douglas faction, he was bearing all before him at sword's point, and waging a victorious though rebellious war with the king and court; or whether he had returned to exile at the capital of England, they knew not. The total absence of all intelligence made them conclude the latter, and that he had taken Lady Jane with him to protect her. Then the countess would weep bitterly at the thought of such a separation; for England was then a hostile country; and places that are now but a day's journey distant were then deemed afar off and difficult of access. A chain of royal castles watched the English from the south, and the cannon of Berwick and Carlisle, Norham and Newcastle, frowned towards the Scottish mountains on the north. Safe conducts and passports were constantly required on both sides of the frontier, the jealous Scot and his aggressive neighbour seldom saw each other save under the peaks of their helmets; and an exchange of cannon-balls and sword-cuts were the only traffic in which they were permitted to deal. Though we can smile at such a state of matters between the two kingdoms, experience is daily showing that Scotland will soon require some *firmer guarantee* for her national privileges than a British parliament can afford her, against the march of centralization.

A little rocky island, half a mile in length by the

eighth of a mile in breadth, could afford but few amusements. Sybil soon tired of watching the white sea-gulls and the gigantic solan geese that floated about the Longcraig, in the fissures of which the waves were ever roaring with a sound of thunder. She tired too of watching the passing ships, the Holland wachters, the Flemish crayers, the Rochellers and Dunkirkers, with their high poops and great square banners; the large brown lug-sails of the boats which then fished between the island and the town of Kinghorn, and of hearkening to the hum of that song which the fishers of the Forth yet chant to their oars, the end of each monotonous verse being—

“The leal gudeman of Aberdour,
Sits in Sir Alan Vipont's tower.”

She tired of watching the endless waves as they rolled on the rocky beach, marking every tenth billow as the largest and most forcible, a phenomenon known since the days of Ovid; and Sybil sighed for the city, whose lofty castle and ridgy outline “piled deep and massy, close and high,” she saw daily shining afar off in the summer sun.

More content—for the wants, the wishes, and the hopes of age are generally few—the countess wiled away the time in the perusal of her missal, and searching for the four-leaved clover which she found sometimes in the little valley, and solemnly pulled, saying, after the old Scottish fashion, “In nomine Patris, Filii et Spiritus Sancti,” to be preserved and worn as a charm against the *evil eye*, which she thought was observable in Sir James Hamilton of Barncleugh.

“Sybil, my bairn,” she frequently whispered, when the besotted castellan was dosing over his wine and

chessboard, "he hath indeed a most evil eye, and whatever he looks upon cannot thrive; so keep all thy blessed relics and consecrated medals about thee. Beware," she would add, smoothing the jet-like ringlets, and kissing the cheek of Sybil, which exhibited that peculiar olive tint of the brave old Douglas race, which is so much richer than the most roseate hue; "beware thee, too, of approaching yonder end of the valley, for I fear me mickle the *gude-wichts* dwell among the rocks;" and in confirmation she pointed to those bright sparry particles which frequently stud basaltic masses, and in Scotland are denominated fairy pennies. "More than once after nightfall, when sitting at my dreary chamber window in yonder tower, I have heard melodious sounds, and seen strange gleams of light emitted from yonder brae. I remember that my worthy father, Sir Archibald, (quhom God assoilzie) once showed me a knowe near unto the duletree that grew beneath our Castell o' Kilspindie, the stones whereof were studded with these sparry marks, and therein dwelt the gude-wichts in such numbers as ye will find the sand on the sea shore. Quiet gude neibours they were, but wrathful and dangerous to molest. It happened in the year 1501, as he rode thereby, in full harness with his visor up, and the red heart fluttering on his pennon behind him—lo! the whole hillock was seemingly raised, and stood on twelve pillars, each about four feet high; and below he saw crowds of wee men and wee women all dressed in grass green, wi' foxglove and blue-bells on their heads. Thousands were dancing to the hum o' fairy harps and drums, while thousands more were airing heaps of gold, and pushing to and fro great chests full of shining coins. Sorely amazed at this sight, his hair bristled up

below his helmet, but he bethought him of the patron of our house.

“ ‘Sancta Brigida, ora pro me !’ said he (being all the Latin he had ever picked up from Father St. Bernard), when down sank the hill, its grassy side became dark, for light and sound and fairies vanished ; and then the gude knight, my father, thought it no shame on his manhood to gallop swiftly away. Ah, me ! this was in the time of king James IV., of gallant memorie !”

Brighter and sunnier June came on ; but such and so close were the measures of the cardinal, and his able second, the king’s advocate, that no tidings reached that lonely little isle of the events which were taking place so near it.

CHAPTER XXI.

JOHN OF THE SILVERMILLS.

"I never met with an adept, or saw such a medicine, though I had fervently prayed for it. Then, I said, 'Surely you are a learned physician?' 'No,' said he, 'I am a brass-founder, and lover of chemistry.'"

BRANDE.

THE king was seated in one of the apartments of that stately tower of Holyrood, that still bears his name, which until recently was visible on the front thereof, carved and gilt in gothic letters,—

Jac. Rex. U. Scotorum.

One window opened towards the Abbey hill, an eminence then covered with apple-trees, and other wood in full foliage; a path ran round its base, and another crossed its summit. The first led to the castle of Restalrig and St. Margaret's gifted well: the second was the ancient Easter-road to Leith. It was then, and for long after, destitute of houses; Gordon, in his View of Edinburgh, taken in 1647, represents only eight small dwellings on this now populous eminence and the Croft-an-Righ that lay between it and the walls of the Abbey Church.

The other window afforded a view of the Calton with its rocks of basalt, then bare, desolate, and unfrequented,

with the eagle hovering over their summits, as if to show that his prey, the ptarmigan, the red grouse, and the black cock, were not far off.

The sun was setting, and its warm light fell aslant upon the waving orchards of Holyrood ; the square towers and magnificent doorway of its church, and the green coppice on which the king was gazing listlessly, with one hand resting on the neck of his favourite old hound Bash, and the other thrust among the thick curls of his auburn hair, as a support to his head. The passers were few. A mendicant friar, with his begging box and staff, came slowly over the hill ; a knight, armed nearly cap-à-pie for travelling, spurred from the Water-gate, and his armour was seen flashing in the sunbeams, among the foliage as he rode towards Restalrig. The king was lost in reverie, and sat with his eyes fixed on the sparrows that twittered on the massive gratings of the large window.

The illness of that fair young bride whom he loved so passionately pressed heavy on his heart ; the more painfully so, that from its perplexing and apparently mysterious nature, it seemed utterly beyond the reach of alleviation. She laboured under a rapid consumption, of the nature of which Francis I. had repeatedly warned James V. ; but young, ardent, and impetuous, her royal lover would listen to nothing save the dictates of his passion ; and slighting the love of Mary of Lorraine (his future wife), he had wedded Magdalene. Now despite all the skill of his physicians, and the care of her own attendants, the young queen, within twenty days after her landing in Scotland, was almost hovering on the brink of the tomb.

As day by day she sank more and more, the Countess of Arran declared that the fairies were extracting all her

strength ; others averred solemnly and gravely, that she was under the influence of withcraft : for it was an age fraught with the wildest superstition. An illness such as hers, when the secret source of decay was unseen and unknown to the quack physicians and astrologers who surrounded her couch, made their restless credulity readily adopt the idea of mystic agency.

The time was full of fanciful terrors ; the dispensations of God were invariably attributed to magic invocations and demoniac maledictions ; to invisible shafts from the elves and fairies who peopled every rock, hill, and tree, the only antidotes to which were the prescriptions and the counter-charms of impostors and self-deluded dabblers in the occult sciences. Dreams, in those days, the result doubtless of ponderous suppers and morbid constitutions, were received as visions of the future, as solemn forewarnings and divine inspirations from God—fraught sometimes with happiness, but more frequently with death and terror, war and woe.

Thus the poor young queen, whose orient eyes while they sank never lost their lustre, and whose cheek while it grew hollow still retained its rosy and transparently beautiful hue, continued to waste and grow thinner ; and the king with agony saw daily how her snowy arms and infantile hands were wearing less and less, until the bones became fearfully visible at last.

He sighed, he prayed, and he wept ; but still the blasting, the wasting, the terrible attenuation went on. Her skin was white as marble, but ever hot and feverish ; and though a gentle smile played ever on her lips, there was a wild, sad earnestness in her large blue eyes, in the quiet depths of which two orient stars—the stars of death—were ever shining. Everything that love could prompt and quackery advise, had been done ; she was

bathed repeatedly in the waters of streams that ran towards the sun; and in those of blessed and sanctified wells, which the saints had consecrated of old—but unavailingly.

Barefooted, with bowed head, and candle in hand, the king had visited many a holy shrine; but still Magdalene became worse; and it was evident to all that the hand of death would soon be upon her—unless, as many added, the *spell* was broken.

Suddenly the arras (which was of green damask flowered with gold) was shaken. The king started. It was raised, and there entered a man, whom a few words will describe.

“Well, most worthy deacon and doctor,” said James, springing eagerly towards him; “what thinkest thou of the queen?”

The new comer mournfully shook his head and stroked his beard.

The young king clasped his hands, and pushing a chair towards the physician, sank again into his own.

John of the Silvermills was an old man with keen grey eyes that twinkled under bushy brows; a long hooked nose; a vast white beard that flowed over his sad-coloured cassock-coat. He wore a black velvet skull-cap, on the front of which were embroidered a cross, and a triangle within a circle—being the emblems of Religion, the Trinity, and Eternity. His form was bent by age; his back was almost deformed, and one of his tremulous but active hands clutched a long silver-headed cane; the other, a small sand-glass, which supplied the place of a watch with the physicians of that age.

Patronized by king James IV., who had been an eminent dabbler in alchemy, he was the first deacon of

the Barber Chirurgeons of Scotland, whom that monarch had incorporated by royal charter in the year 1505; when every guild brother was obliged to pay five pounds to the altar of St. Mungo of Glasgow, and prove his knowledge of "anatomie, the nature and complexioun of everie member of the human bodie; and in lykwayis, all the vaynis of the samyn, that he may mak flewbothamea in dew tyme; and alsua that he may know in quhilk member the *Signe* has domination for the tyme;" for then astronomy, astrology, and alchemy formed the principal part of a medical education; and king James IV. spent vast sums on the wild experiments of the learned John, at his laboratory, from which a district of our capital then obtained and still retains the name of *Silvermills*.

"Ah, my God! and thou,—thou hast no good tidings for me, my venerable friend?" said the young king, imploringly, as he seated himself.

"The queen's grace is assuredly in great dolour and sore pain," replied the physician, resting his chin on the top of his cane, and fixing his keen eyes on the anxious and beautiful face of the young monarch; "she complains of an aching head, of a burning heart, and of a constant weariness and lassitude which overwhelm her. There is something in all this which perplexes me, and it seemeth——"

"Beyond thy skill, in short? But oh, say not that!"

"Nay, nay," continued the mediciner, who spoke slowly, while his keen visage shook on the staff where he had perched it; "but I must give it long and deep thought. I am assured—at least I hope—there is in my pharmacopœia some simple that will restore her. That learned apothegar and worshipful clerk (though I

agree with him in few things), Galen, the physician of Pergamus, possessed a manuscript which enumerated fifty thousand families of the vegetable world, with all their restorative or destructive qualities. Oh, for one glimpse of that glorious volume! In all things following strictly the rules laid down by the learned Artesius, (who lived a thousand years by that very elixir, the secret of which is, at this time, enabling Paracelsus to work so many miraculous cures,) in the year 1509, I compounded my *nepenthe*, a drug which driveth away all manner of pain, and my *opobalsamum*, which was powerful, even as the blessed Balm of Gilead; to the queen's grace I have administered them both for the past week, and yet, miraculous to relate, she daily groweth worse."

"My wife! my heart!" said the king, again wringing his hands; "must I see my poor dear little Magdalene perish thus? I love her too much, and perhaps God is about to take her from me. Oh! canst thou do nothing for her?"

"I was at the University of Basil in 1525, storing my mind with fresh knowledge, when Paracelsus, by the recommendation of Ecolampadius was called to fill the chair of physic and surgery, and was present on that day when he so presumptuously burned the works of Avicenna and Galen, assuring us that the latchets of his shoes knew more of physic than both these learned doctors; and that all the universities and all the writers of the earth, past and present, knew less than the smallest hair of his beard; for he had in his brain the mighty secret which would prolong life for ever—yea, even unto the verge of eternity—the secret of Artesius."

"This was the very madness of learning and vanity," said the king. "Well?"

"Erasmus believed in him, and was cured of a grievous illness by one drop of the principal ingredient."

"What, Desiderius Erasmus, of Rotterdam, the tutor of my brother Alexander, who fell at Flodden? Well, well—and this—"

"Ingredient was a simple used of old by a King of Egypt, and it is now written in hieroglyphics on the southern side of the great pyramid."

"And those hieroglyphics?"

"None can read save sorcerers; for Paracelsus on that day, at Basil, destroyed, with the works of Avicenna, the sole existing key thereto, and which was written on a blank leaf thereof."

"May the devil confound thee, Paracelsus, and the great pyramid to boot! I fear me much, thy musty magic will never cure the queen."

"I pardon your majesty's anger, for it hath its source in grief," replied John of the Silvermills, calmly; "nature is full of mysteries. Our cradle and our coffin may be formed from the same tree, and yet we be ignorant thereof. Paracelsus—"

"I say again, Mahound take Paracelsus! but what doth this trite remark mean?"

"That, like the mass of the unlettered world, your majesty scoffs at what appears incomprehensible, and—"

The apothegar paused, for the arras was raised by a hand covered by a glove of fine scarlet leather, and Cardinal Beaton, who at all hours had the *entrée* of the king's apartments, stood before them, and both king and subject knelt to kiss his ring.

"The peace of the Lord be with thee and with thy spirit!" said the cardinal, seating himself, and looking kindly at the king, whose grief and distress were marked

in every feature of his fine face. "In the ante-chamber I have heard how poorly her majesty is, and Mademoiselle Brissac has just been imploring my prayers, poor child ! But proceed, my learned doctor," he added, with a slight smile ; while the deacon of the surgeons again perched his chin on the top of his cane, which was half hidden by his long white beard, and thus continued—

"Your majesty rails at the learned Paracelsus ; I can afford to pardon that, when I remember me that to him we are indebted for introducing to the pharmacopœia, the mercurial, the antimonial, and ferruginous preparations which act so beneficially upon the organs of our system."

"But is not this Paracelsus, of whom thou boastest, an impure pantheist," asked the cardinal, "who, while believing in the existence of pure spirits which are without souls, receives aliment from minerals and fluids, and whose physiological theories are a wild mass of the most incoherent ideas, founded almost solely upon an application of the damnable mysteries of the cabala to the natural functions of the frame which God has given us?"

"I do not quite understand your eminence," replied John of the Silvermills, turning, with as much asperity as he dared, to the cardinal, whose towering figure and magnificent dress were imposing enough, without the memory of that important position held by him ; "but I understand, and, with Paracelsus, believe, (what certain malevolent commentators have denied,) that the sun hath an influence upon the heart, as the moon hath upon the brain ; that Jupiter acts upon the liver, as Saturn doth upon the spleen ; Mercury on the lungs, Mars on the bile, and Venus on the kidneys and certain other organs. Hence the true apothegar should

know the planets of the microcosm, their meridian, and their zodiac, before he attempteth to cure a disease. By due attention to them, he attains the discovery of the most hidden secrets of nature; for our human bodies are but a conglomeration of sulphur, of mercury, and of immaterial salt, which rendereth them peculiarly liable to planetary influences; and as each of these three elements may admit of another, we may, without knowing it, possess within us water that is *dry*, and fire that is *cold*."

"A subtle sophist," said the cardinal, with a smile.

The king listened in silence, and, full of Paracelsus, the doctor continued—

"Thus, please your eminence, by identifying himself with the celestial intelligences, hath this wondrous physician so nearly attained a knowledge of the philosopher's stone, and, by curing all diseases, raised to his fame a monument based on the four quarters of the earth. And doubtless if he prolongeth his own life, as he doth that of others, in time to come he will attain the secret of that *other* powerful ELIXIR, by which Adam and the patriarchs prolonged their lives before the Deluge—yea, even unto nine centuries."

"Gramercy me!" said the cardinal; "and beware thee, John! this man whom thou upholdest glories in the fame of his sorcery, and openly boasts of receiving from Galen letters that are dated *from Hell*, and also of his recent disputes held with Avicenna at the gate of that dread abode—disputes on the transmutation of metals, the elixir of the patriarchs, and the quintessence of the mithridate; for I heard of all these things when I was studying the canon law at Paris. He blasphemously takes as his primary supports the writings of the holy

fathers; and while asserting that the blessed Gospels lead to all manner of truth, dares to add, that magical medicine can be learned by the study of the Apocalypse alone."

"Enough of this, lord cardinal," said the king, impatiently, observing that the doctor was angrily adjusting his velvet cap, preparatory to returning to the charge; "enough of this jargon, amid which my poor Magdalene will probably die."

"It may be so, though God avert it; for the disease is all but beyond my skill; and I dread to state my suspicions, now that both my *nepenthe* and *opobalsamum* have failed."

"Thy suspicions?" reiterated the cardinal.

"I know them already," said the king, gloomily. "Like the Countess of Arran, thou wouldst say that she is under a spell?"

"Which nothing but a counter-spell can break."

"Mother of God!" said the king, "I cannot believe in such things! Lord cardinal, dost thou?"

"And what manner of charm, Deacon?" asked the cardinal, affecting not hear the king; for he did not scoff at sorcery, though he did at Paracelsus.

"A *muild*, as our peasants call it. She may have trod upon a muild, which is a powder of potent effect, prepared from the bones of the dead, and scattered by sorcerers in the path of their enemies. We all know that, at the Sabaoth of the witches, sepulchres are violated, corpses are dismembered, and the limy particles of the bones pulverized to operate as mischiefs upon mankind. At this time, the queen hath all the symptoms of one who hath trod upon an enchanted muild, or dieth of pricked images—for they are the same. A swarving of the heart, a fluttering of the breast. When

the patients will merely sicken they turn red—when they will die, they turn pale.”

“And the queen is pale?” said the cardinal.

“Yea, even as death.”

“The cure—the cure?” sighed the king.

“There are two: the first is, to find a certain reptile, forming one of the six species of salamanders which are indigenous in southern Europe, in the head whereof is a red stone, to be taken as a powder. For it is written by Paracelsus——”

“Paracelsus again!” said James, stamping his foot; “the second cure?”

“Is to burn the sorcerer.”

“Then Sir Adam Otterburn must sift this matter to its bottom.”

“Ah, that reminds me,” said the doctor, rising up, and clutching his sand-glass; “I must now retire, with your majesty’s leave.”

“To visit Sir Adam? I knew not that he ailed.”

“A sword-thrust.”

“From whom?”

“Sir Roland Vipont.”

“Vipont again!” said James V., knitting his brows; “thus it is my friends are ever slaying each other. But he, my most valiant and true friend, has been quite besotted by those Setons of Ashkirk.”

“He knew not of their arrest,” said the cardinal; “it was a sudden rencontre—a quarrel.”

“Oh, in that case, I have nothing to do with such little amusements. The Countess of Ashkirk?”

“Is in Barncleugh’s ward at Inchkeith.”

“Where I will keep her as long as James I. kept Euphemia of Ross on Inchcolin. An old intriguing limmer! And the Lady Jane?”

"Hath escaped to—no one knows where."

"Poor damsel! I feel some compunction for her, and fear that she hath been sorely misled by that deep old Douglas her mother. And then the earl?"

"Hath vanished too."

"To England?"

"Most probably."

"But is Redhall's wound severe!" asked James.

The cardinal turned to the doctor.

"A fair run through the body, at the shoulder," said the physician. "'Twas well for him that Mercury, which influences the lungs, was not in Abdevinam, or the lord advocate's gown had been vacant."

"Vipont goeth from bad to worse," said the king, as the cardinal turned away to conceal his laughter. "Kincavil run through the body one day, and my advocate the next. We must restrain his vivacity. In this spirit, Vipont will achieve little in Douglasdale; but let him bear in mind the vow I made when Sir David Falconer, the captain of my guard, was slain when covering the retreat of the artillery from Tantallan!"

"I hope your majesty will remember as well your gracious promise anent the charter, exempting our learned corporation from watching and warding, and all manner of military service within the city, save in time of siege."

"Does your eminence hear?" said James, with a smile, to the cardinal.

"It is just passing the seals," replied the chancellor; "and I will send the Lord Lindesay with it to-morrow—so, meantime, farewell."

The cardinal, who had more sense than a thousand such as Paracelsus or John of the Silvermills, wisely recommended the king to remove his suffering bride to

Balmerino (in Fifeshire), a Cistercian abbey, founded by the queen of William the Lion, Ermengarde de Beaumont, whose grave lay there, before the high altar. In this magnificent old pile, which was dedicated to St. Mary, apartments were prepared for the sickly Magdalene. In a rich and pastoral district, it occupied a beautiful situation, among fruitful orchards and the remains of an old primeval forest, sheltered on one side by verdant hills, and fanned on the other by the cool breeze from the bright blue basin of the Tay.

On a sunny morning in June, under a salute of cannon from the castle, amid which the vast report of Old Mons or rather Monce Meg of Galloway was conspicuous, the young queen, with her anxious husband riding by her litter, and attended by a select number of courtiers (forming, however, a long cavalcade of horse), was conveyed from Holyrood to Leith, where Sir Robert Barton's ship received and landed her two hours after, on the yellow sands of Fife. From thence they crossed the deep and fertile glen called the Howe, and, descending the Scurr Hill, approached Balmerino.

With many deep sighs and portentous shakes of the head, all indicative of what no one could divine, John of the Silvermills had to abandon his smoke-begrimed laboratory near the water of Leith, and accompany the court; carrying his books of Paracelsus, Galen, and Avicenna, and the anatomical works of Hippocrates, Herophilus, and of the great modern, Vesalius (the expositor of the errors of Galen), with all his retorts, crucibles, chafing-dishes, horoscopes, and other scientific rubbish, packed on sumpter-horses, by which much irreparable damage was sustained by certain glass phials and bottles that contained—the Lord alone knew what; but one was said to be the famous powder of *projection*,

which when thrown upon heated mercury or lead, turned them into silver or gold, and the loss thereof made the patient John rend his long beard, and passionately bequeath himself to the devil a hundred times.

"If Magdalene groweth well here," said the king to the cardinal, as they dismounted at the gate of the monastery, "to your eminence alone will Scotland and I be indebted for her recovery; but if she becometh worse, and our suspicions are confirmed, then woe to the *authors* of her illness—woe!"

CHAPTER XXII.

TEN RED GRAINS.

“Yes! in an hour like this, ’twere vain to hide
The heart so long and so severely tried :
Still to thy name that heart hath fondly thrilled,
But sterner duties called and were fulfilled.”

Mrs. HEMANS.

PRIOR to his departure for Balmerino, and immediately on his leaving the palace, the learned apothegar visited the king’s advocate.

The town house of Sir Adam Otterburn, the Redhall lodging, as it was named, and as we have before stated, stood upon the south side of the Canongate, and near to the eastern end thereof.

At the present day the south side of this venerable street, the memories of which go back to the days of St. David I., and the glories of Earl Randolph and Ramsay of Dalhousie, is still somewhat straggling, irregular and open ; in 1537 it was much more so. The houses were then detached, surrounded by gardens, and even parks ; for there were several barn-yards in the Canongate, some of which were destroyed by cannonading during the siege of 1573.

The severe plagues of 1514 and 1520, which followed the slaughter of Flodden, swept away many of

the citizens, whose houses were demolished to remove all chance of lingering infection; thus the mansion of Redhall was remarkably solitary. A ruined and desolate barn-yard lay to the westward; and a grass park, shaded by many beautiful sycamores, extended on the east nearly to the foot of the alley known as the Horsewynd.

It was a strong square five-storied house, with walls of enormous thickness; its crow-stepped gable and one vast chimney studded with oyster-shells faced the street; at each corner was a square corbelled turret, from the tops of which, in wet weather, two stone spouts disgorged the rain-water without mercy on the passengers. To the street, the windows were few, small, and, according to the Scottish custom, secured with rusty iron gratings. The first and second stories were vaulted with solid stone, and stone slabs covered the roof. Externally the edifice was destitute of ornament; but strong as rock, it would have withstood a salvo of cannon-balls; and was one of the most perfect specimens of the old Scottish house existing, before the introduction of the more florid French style. Studded with iron, the small door was deeply recessed in the wall, and protected by four loopholes, splayed without and within, to admit of a wide range for arrows or arquebuses; while it was further secured by a transverse beam of oak, which superseded all necessity for locks or bolts.

A fortnight had now elapsed since the night on which the earl and his sister had been carried off; yet in all that time Redhall had been totally incapable of prosecuting his schemes either of love or vengeance; for that *fortunate* sword thrust which he had received from the hand of Vipont, together with the fever produced by

his own furious and boiling passions, had bound him down to a sick bed, from which, however, by the care or quackery of the learned John of Silvermills, he was now fast recovering.

Pale, care-worn, and feverish in aspect, a day in the beginning of June saw him again seated at his writing table, immersed in his masses of correspondence, his mysterious portfolios, which were full of strange memorandums in ciphers and Latin contractions, which none could read save himself and the cardinal. His trusty rascal Birrel, who was always at hand, and ready for everything, from cleaning his master's boots to cleaving his enemies' heads with a Jethart staff, was in attendance as usual, when our acquaintance of the preceding chapter was announced, and Birrel, starting from Sir Adam's chair, where he had been in close confab, drew back the arras.

"God save you, Sir Adam Otterburn," said the learned John, stroking his long beard according to his invariable custom; "how—again at thy pen, despite mine earnest injunction?"

"Business of the State—fiend take it! I must attend now, for a mountain of matter hath accumulated here."

"Ah," said the physician, setting down his sand-glass and fixing his keen eyes thereon, while his bony fingers were applied to the pulse of Redhall's left hand—"Ah! thy pulse is very irregular—thy nerves are burning. Now nothing affects the nerves so much as intense thought, and by thine eyes I see thou hast been thinking intensely. By this, the vital motions are hurt, the functions disordered, the whole frame unhinged. Thou must continue to take my potion night and morning."

"What! more of thy diabolical drench?"

"How, Sir Adam! Dost thou so defame my prescription, which I have compounded from the identical récépé left by that worshipful clerk, John of Gaddesden, the worthy author of the 'Rosa Anglica,' the possessor of that valuable necklace which when drawn tight cured all manner of fits."

"Ah, my friend, Sanders Screw hath another which doth the very same."

"Indeed! thou amazest me," said the physician, resting his bearded chin on his staff. "John of Gaddesden's collar was an anodyne necklace, and had the word *abracadabra* written thereon."

"But the collar of Carle Sanders is only a stout cord," said the advocate, with a sardonic grin.

"I blush, Sir Adam, that thou shouldst name this vile worm in the same breath with John of Gaddesden," said the physician, indignantly, as he arose and grasped his sand-glass; "a man whose virtues shone bright as the rays of Acarnan—the star of Eridanus. Ah! he was a fortunate man, that John of Gaddesden; he was born when Astroarch, queen of the planets, was shining in all her glory in Abdevinam—the head of the twelfth mansion; while I, unhappy! was born, as I have discovered by the aid of my new astrolabe, on a night of storms."

"Thou hast brought back my poniard, I hope?"

"It is here," replied the visitor, taking a dagger from his belt; "the *contents* of this cause death within two hours after they are taken."

"Two hours?"

"He who imbibes them," he continued, in a low voice, "falleth down senseless, lifeless, and dies without a groan—suddenly as if shot with a hand-gun. Sir Michael Scott had this secret of a learned clerk at

Salamanca, whither he rode in one night, and ere day-break was again at his castle of Balwearie."

"There is a powder, too—zounds! I had well nigh forgot it: 'the sleeping powder.'"

"'Tis here," replied the physician, taking a packet from the pocket that hung at his girdle; "this was first prepared for a caliph of the East, by Geber, the learned Arabian astrologer, who flourished in the eighth century, and whose three works on chemistry were published at Strasbourg seventeen years ago, that is, in 1520."

"Hand it hither: thou weariest me; for, by St. Grisell! all thy messes seem to be compounded by devils and philosophers."

"Thou still appliest my *Unguentum Armarium*?"

"Regularly," replied the advocate, resuming impatiently the writing at which he had been interrupted.

"And thy wound?"

"Is almost closed, thank God!"

"Good—good," muttered the physician to himself; "I knew well that my ointment, compounded of the ashes of that written charm, brayed with those of the dried Zusalzef of the Arabians, would cure the deadliest wound; 'tis a potent fruit, for it ripens in the sun, and the sun acts upon the heart, the source of life."

"I would fain see some of this wonderful fruit."

"I have one in my pouch—behold!"

"'S life! 'tis but a common prune!"

"The *prune* of the unlettered, is the *Zusalzef* of Geber and Paracelsus; but farewell, Sir Adam, I go; and omit not to continue the potion and the *Unguentum Armarium*."

"Devil go with thee, for a plague," muttered the

advocate, as he seemingly bowed with courtesy, and became again immersed in his writing.

Nichol Birrel again approached.

"And this was all thou hadst to tell me?" said Redhall; "that no tidings had arrived from Douglasdale; and that, in short, neither Vipont nor young Balquhan had come to blows with any of the Douglas faction."

"Exactly sae, my lord."

"And that they spent their time in hunting and hawking, with free inquartering for horse and man, wherever it pleased them to halt."

"Just sae," replied Birrel, with an obsequious nod.

"Thou knowest the lands of my kinsman, Fleming of the Cairntable, whose bounds they are approaching?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Then take a good horse, and ride for your life and death; and take with thee these three-hundred groats of the fleur-de-lys to pay thy way. Tell my kinsman, Fleming, that I wish this viper, this Vipont I mean, should take up his last abode in Douglasdale."

"In the kirkyard thereof?"

"Yes, yes; set them by the ears if thou canst; I will see Fleming skaithless, even though he resists the royal banner; but either by fair means or foul, keep Vipont from returning here. Dost thou see this poniard which the apothegar hath just left? observe me, and observe narrowly."

He unscrewed the pommel, and showed Birrel that the steel knob, which was hollow, contained several large red grains.

"Each of these grains," said he, carefully rescrowing it, "is a human life; there are *ten*, and Sir Roland Vipont hath but one life; take it in thy belt to Douglas-

dale, for they may prove useful if the blade fails. One word ere thou goest: how is the Lady Seton this morning?"

"Composed and quiet, as weel she may be, after the girning and graning of a fortnight."

"Tib, thy neice, Tib Trotter, from Redhall, still attends her with care, and Dobbie keeps watch?"

"Like a deerhound, my lord; and I forewarned Tib that the lady she was to attend was a pair demented and brainbraised creature, that would tell her a' kind o' queer stories about you, Sir Adam—stories o' whilk, on peril of her life, she was to tak nae heed; and I said that death would be as nothing to her doom, if the daft lady (whom I call a kinswoman of your ain, frae the north countrie) fled; and as pair Tib is mair frightened for you than for the devil himself, she scarcely sleeps for fear that her charge escapes."

"And Dobbie?"

"Considers her a State prisoner awaiting a private precognition."

"Good—I will ere long requit this trust, and amply too; meantime, away thou for Douglasdale: remember all my instructions; and now give me thy thumb on them, that thou wilt be for ever my firm man and true."

"Sir Adam! Sir Adam!" said the pricker, presenting his thumb reproachfully, "surely this was na' needed frae me."

But the cautious baron ratified their despicable compact by that mysterious pressure of thumbs, without which no bargain in Scotland, either for good or for evil, was ever held binding.*

* See Note.

During this conversation, Redhall had never ceased writing with the utmost rapidity, that he might lose no time ; but the moment Birrel retired to prepare for his embassy, he closed his portfolio, and stepped into the little dressing closet which opened off the study or library.

He examined his face with scrupulous accuracy, and a foppishness at which he smiled, as if in contempt of himself. With some concern he observed, that confinement and his wound had rendered his features paler and more haggard than ever. That wound ! every time he thought of it, and of the blood, the pain, and anxiety it had cost him, he ground his teeth vengefully ; but after arranging his long dark hair, and carefully pointing and perfuming his handsome beard and moustachios, he concluded there were many worse looking men in the city. Although his nether man was cased in sad-coloured hosen, he put on a full skirted doublet of blue velvet, with loose hanging sleeves and a broad rolling collar of ermine ; he wore diamond-studded ruffs at his wrists, a vest with sleeves of cloth of gold, and the collar of his shirt, which was pinched and embroidered with red silk and gold thread, was spread over the ermine. His sword was sheathed in crimson velvet, his poniard sparkled with jewels, and he was perfumed to excess, for it was the fashion of the age.

Tall and stately, pale and dark, his aspect was alike magnificent and impressive ; as thus deliberately prepared with a foppery of which he could not have believed himself capable, he took his way for the first time toward the chamber of his fair prisoner.

He felt that his step was feeble as he walked ; the room swam around him ; and ever and anon an admonitory twinge shot through his wounded shoulder.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FIRST VISIT.

“ Ah! false and cruel fortune! foul despite!
While other's triumph, I am drowned in woe.
And can it be that I such treasure slight?
And can I then my weary life forego?
No! let me die; 'twere happiness above
A longer life, if I must cease to love.”

Orlando Furioso.

SUNK in an abyss of deep and gloomy thoughts, Jane Seton sat at a window of the apartment which had been allotted to her, until Sir Adam Otterburn could have her removed to his house of Redhall, a strong square tower, situated on an eminence near the village of Hailes, a few miles south-west of Edinburgh.

This he intended to have done the moment he was able to ride; and nothing but his wound—“that accursed wound,” as he called it—prevented the removal of the lady and her brother, on the very day succeeding their capture, to this lonely fortlet, which stood among thick woodlands above the Leith, and just where a modern mansion occupies the site of that more ancient Redhall which the soldiers of General Monk besieged and destroyed.

A stupid but good-natured country girl from his

barony—one who stood in dread of Sir Adam, regarding him as a demi-god and superior being, rather than a mere man and master—attended Jane; and, considering her a poor deranged lady, had been most provokingly sympathetic, and inaccessible to bribes, to threats, and entreaties; while Dobbie, like a watchful bull-dog, sat always in a niche near the door, with a small barrel of ale to solace him, and a pack of cards, with which he practised tricks and sleight-of-hand against himself.

The walls were of enormous thickness, and the small windows were massively barred; the apartment was hung with rich cream-coloured arras, studded with gorgeous red flowers; the cornices, the chairs, the panelling of the doors and shutters were all profusely gilded; a ghittern, an embroidery frame, a few black-letter books of poetry and romance, and a few vellum illuminations of Scripture, with various other things which might serve to wile away a lady's time, were scattered on the buffets and window-seats; while several boxes of the most splendid jewels which the art of Master Mossman could produce, stood most alluringly on the table, with their lids open, but all unnoticed.

The window at which Jane sat faced the south, but the line of venerable chestnut-trees obstructed the view of the Craigs and of St. Leonard's Hill. A grass-park, some hundred yards in length, extended to the wall, which these trees overhung, together with a mass of ivy and wild roses. Ruined and deserted houses lay on the right and left; and thus, for fourteen days, had the poor girl sat at that window, without an hour's cessation, watching for a passenger to whom she might cry for succour; but though the chamber was lofty, the height of the surrounding wall, the thickness of the trees, and the loneliness of the path which passed under

them, had prevented her from seeing a single person, (though several passed that way daily,) save the girl who attended her, and occasional glimpses of the indefatigable Dobbie, on guard outside ; neither of whom could afford, even to her most piteous entreaties, a single word concerning the fate of her brother ; why she was thus confined ; or what had become of Sir Roland Vipont, for whose silence and inertness she could in no way account, unless that he was in a State prison for the wound which she understood he had given Redhall, whose consequent illness had agreeably accounted to her for *his* absence.

On the table lay fourteen notes, being those he had sent every morning, containing compliments, condolences, and entreaties to be forgiven for that rash act, to which the excess of his love, and the feverish dread of losing her, his hopes that she might yet learn to esteem him, and so forth, had driven him ; but of these laborious epistles not one had been read, and the fourteen lay on the table unopened.

These fourteen days had soothed the first burst of her grief and anger ; intense weariness and bitter impatience had succeeded : yet she could not but acknowledge that in all, save the loss of liberty, she was treated with the utmost delicacy, attention, and respect.

It was evening now—the evening of the fourteenth weary day, as she was reckoning, for the thousandth time, on her fingers ; the sun was setting on the flinty brows of Salisbury ; and the leaves of the trees, as they fluttered in the wind, seemed formed alternately of green and gold. A mass of verdure overhung the walls which surrounded the tall old mansion, the cold dewy shadow of which fell far to the south and eastward. Haggard in aspect, wearied with weeping, and though

the month was June, benumbed and cold by want of rest, Jane, who for these fourteen days and nights had never dared to undress, or to avail herself of the luxurious couch provided for her, and who had never dared to sleep, save by snatches in an arm-chair, now turned with a wild, startled, and almost fierce expression of inquiry to Sir Adam Otterburn, as he entered; for never was there a face more admirably calculated to express the two very opposite aspects of mildness and disdain than hers.

"Proud, relentless, and pitiless woman!" thought this bold abductor, as he approached, "at last I have thee completely in my power—at my mercy, utterly!"

Lady Jane had arisen full of anger and defiance, but there was an expression in the eyes of her admirer that terrified her; and feeling completely (as he had thought) at his mercy, she could only cling to her chair, and falter out—

"Oh, my God! Sir Adam Otterburn, what is the meaning of all this?—why am I imprisoned here?—and what seek you from me?"

"Pardon," said he, in his gentlest voice, and with clasped hand, bending his eyes on the ground—"pardon for this wrong, which the excess of love alone has committed."

"And why hast thou dared to do me this wrong?"

"I dare do anything, fair Jane, but excite your displeasure. For heaven's sake be composed. Oh, spare me your hatred, and look not so wildly. Think of the depth and of the ardour of my sentiments—the sincerity of my intentions towards you. Long, long have I borne this fatal love in my heart, as a secret—a secret to brood over, since those days when you so thoughtlessly permitted me to nourish it." Jane would have

spoken, but he continued, sadly and energetically: "Amid the splendid pageants, the costly banquets, the stately mummeries of a court, and the dull tedium of public business, it has ever been in my heart, in my soul, and on my lips—this secret, which I would have given the world to muse over in some noiseless solitude, where nothing would dispel the bright illusions love raised within me. Ever among the crowds of the city, and the debates of the parliament, it came to me—a soft, low whisper of your name. I heard it only; and the voices of those around me became as a drowsy hum, and sounded as if afar off, for my whole soul was with thee. Oh, Lady Jane, this secret has been a part of my very being. Night after night I have prayed for you, and have laid my head on its pillow without consolation; day after day I have blessed you, on awaking to a world that was without hope for me, and yet I have lived, and loved, and lingered on. But pardon me—I am grieving you."

He paused on seeing that Jane, overcome either by her feelings or by exhaustion, had again sunk into a chair. Her alarm subsided at the sound of his sad, solemn, and harmonious voice; and something of pity rose in her bosom, for she saw that he was indeed frightfully pale and careworn.

"My brother," said she; "and what hast thou dared to do with him?"

"Nothing, dear madam: he is safe."

"But where?"

"Below us."

"Below? Gracious me!" said Jane, breathlessly, as her horror and hatred revived; for she saw the cruel game about to be played by Redhall. "Wretch! and

to coerce the miserable sister, thou holdest in thy guilty hands the life and death of the brother!"

"Nay, do not think me so base; warrants are out for the apprehension of the earl as a traitor, and nowhere is he safe save in the secrecy of this abode, which, however, both you and he will soon change for the sunnier atmosphere of my country tower at Redhall."

Lady Jane's anger at the coolness with which this was intimated, prevented her making an immediate reply; but she looked all she felt, yet only for a time; there was again in the black eyes of Sir Adam that magnetic—that almost superhuman glance, which terrified her. She thought of her mother's legends of the "Evil Eye;" and unable to sustain the powerful gaze of this remarkable man, she paused, and her eyelids drooped, to be raised again with hesitation; for the basilisk expression of his eyes was no less singular than the melodious tone of his soft and modulated voice was pleasing and subduing.

"Lady Jane Seton, you cannot have forgotten our last meeting, and the interview to which I referred at Holyrood; that interview which occurred now nearly a long year ago, in the garden of the abbot. Do you still remember that soft moonlight night, and the tenor of our conversation—a conversation, to me, so full of hope, of joy, of tumult, and of giddy expectation. Ah, you did not then repel me with eyes of proud disdain, or words of studied scorn. That night, whenever I spoke, you were all earnestness, all smiles, and all attention."

"Because, Sir Adam,—and I call Heaven to be my witness,—I knew not that your words meant more than

the mere gallantry of a well-bred man when conversing with a pretty woman."

"This is mere coquetry," said he, emphatically; "but since that night I have been a dotard—a fool—the moon-gazing slave of an illusion. My God! on that night I could not believe in the excess of my joy, when I thought you were permitting me to love you: nor have I since been able to realize the full extent of my misery and suspense. Oh, I have been as one in a dream—a long and fearful dream; for in a dream we feel so much more acutely than when awake!" He paused; and, clasping his hands, continued again:

"Listen! I have a high office in the kingdom; my power is nearly equal to that of his eminence the cardinal. I am the grand inquisitor of the state, and the interrogator, the questioner, the torturer of all alleged criminals. I may throw the highest in the land into a dungeon, with or without a charge, if it suits my purpose or my fancy so to do; and I have at all times the ear of the king and his chancellor. Ponder over this, dear lady, for thou art the daughter of a fallen race. I have a noble estate, which ere long will be erected into an earldom——"

"On the ruin of my gallant brother's—hah!"

"On the ruin of none: but won honourably."

"I despise all earldoms that are not won as my forefathers' were, by the sword."

"There spoke thy mother's haughty spirit, lady, and I love it well; but if thou didst know, fully and sorrowfully as I do, the irreparable destruction which hovers over thee and thine—a destruction which I alone can avert—thou wouldst listen to my sad, my earnest, my honourable proposal, with more of patience, and less, perhaps, of petulance and pride."

"And I say unto thee, Adam Otterburn of Redhall, that if thou knewest the horror and repugnance with which a virtuous woman—one whose heart, in all its first freshness and the first flush of its feeling, is wholly with another—listens to the accents of love from any but the chosen of that heart, thou wouldst know what I endure in hearing these laboured addresses of thine."

Stung to the very soul by this studied reply, which was alike calculated to kindle his jealousy and extinguish his hopes, the face of that dark and stern man assumed a white and ghastly expression; his basilisk eye again terrified her, and she shrunk within herself.

"Impossible!" said he, as he grasped her arm, and a deadly smile curled his thin but finely-formed lips; "it is impossible that you, so pure in mind, so high in spirit, so accomplished and refined, can love this fop, this fool—this mere soldier, of whom you know so little. Your love for him is a mere childish fantasy, of which you are the victim. Ever brawling and fighting, this hair-brained cut-throat will probably never return from Douglasdale, whither he has marched on the king's service; but doubtless you think that this gay cavalier, this Vipont, with his tall plume and gilt armour, would make a much more romantic spouse than your most humble and more matter of fact serviteur."

Jane heard only one part of this rude sneer—that which informed her Roland was gone to Douglasdale. She felt consoled; his absence was thus accounted for.

"Ah, my gallant Vipont!" said she, unable to resist the ardour his name kindled within her, and the temptation to sting his enemy; "hadst thou been in Edinburgh, I had long since been free, avenged, and at my mother's side."

"'Tis time to put an end to this folly," said Redhall, gnashing his teeth. "Listen! Thy mother's side? Thy mother is a prisoner in the castle of Inchkeith; there in ward, under Hamilton of Barncleugh, charged with treason, and resetting the traitor her son."

"My mother! oh, my poor mother!" faltered Jane, clasping her hands.

"The same warrant included the arrest of you, lady, and of the unfortunate earl your brother; but the people deem that thou and he are fled. But better were thou and he in the grave, than living to encounter all that fate has in store for you on falling into the hands of that government to which I can surrender you both in an hour!"

"My brother—who will dare to touch my brave brother?"

"Who?" replied Redhall, with one of those cutting smiles which sometimes exasperated even his best friends; "the worthy gentlemen who handled him so roughly a few nights ago."

"And what awaits him?"

"Can you ask me? The dungeon of the castle—the high court of parliament—the solemn sentence—the ignominious scaffold—the spiked head—the blighted name, and the torn banner; yet each and all of these I can avert, if—if——"

"What?"

"Thou wilt only try to love me!"

"Horrible! love thee? Oh, this is mere insanity!"

"I, who have done, can undo. I will restore him to his power at court, his coronet, his castles and his baronies, to his seat in parliament, his offices of great cupbearer to the king and governor of Blackness; I will restore him to the world, to rank, to honour, yea,

to life itself, I may say, for it is doubly forfeited, if thou wilt but love me. Thy mother, old, infirm, and broken in spirit by grief, by shame, and wounded pride, I will take from that lonely island prison, where she is exposed to so many severe degradations and privations, from the damp mists of the German Sea, and many other miseries that old age cannot long endure, and will restore her to her wonted place, as mistress of the household and first lady of the court, if thou wilt but love me. A hundred gallant knights of her father's house, with the great Angus himself, shall be restored, to place, to power, to home, to happiness, and to honour, and the Hamiltons of Arran shall be subverted and exiled to Cadyow and Kinniel, even though I should unroll my own banner against them, if thou wilt only permit me to love thee in return. Still no reply ! Think, lady, think of all I say, for these things are well worth pondering over. All these may be done by a word, but withhold that word, and they shall remain undone. Dost thou hear me, lady ?”

“ Yes ; I have heard that thou who hast *done* can *undo* !”

“ And thine answer ?”

“ *Is*—that I despise and abhor thee, from whom my kinsmen of Seton and Douglas have endured so much ;” and she turned haughtily away.

“ Be it so,” said he, calmly but sternly. “ Then, let banishment and proscription, the headsman's axe and the doomster's hand, hang over the lords and barons, the knights and adherents of Ashkirk and of Angus ; let infamy and vengeance, destruction and death, dog them close, since thou hast abandoned them—thou who by a word could have saved them all. They are each but as puppets in my hands—puppets whose destiny I may

lengthen or shorten as I choose, for the strings of their fate are in my power, and I will be merciless to them, as thou, Jane Seton, hast been this day to me!"

Jane trembled, and her heart swelled as if it would have burst; for she knew too bitterly the truth of all Sir Adam said, and she felt that, hated and blood-stained, cool, calculating, and detestable, as this man was, she could have sacrificed herself to his insane passion to save her mother, her brother, her family and kinsmen—for kindred blood was then a sacred tie in Scotland—but for Roland.

"Oh, Vipont! Vipont!" she sobbed, and buried her face in her hands; "my heart is sorely tempted to abandon thee—but in vain!"

Then Redhall, lest he might say more to widen the gulf between them, and with lover-like indecision repenting even what he had said, retired abruptly, and left her bathed in tears, and with a bosom full of the most clamorous anxiety and alarm, not for herself, but for her mother and the earl. To know that the former was a captive in the castle of the Inch, and that she, her only daughter, was not beside her to soothe and console her grief and pride; that her brother, too, was separated from her only by a stone wall; and that they were both prisoners in the midst of a dense population—but a few feet from a busy street, where so many strong hands and stout hearts might easily be summoned to their rescue—prisoners in the hands of one so deep and stern in purpose, so relentless in his vengeance, as Redhall,—caused her the most complicated emotions of agony and dread.

For the thousandth time she examined the bolted door, the tapestried walls, and the grated windows, for a means of escape, but found them all as before; and

then, after once more failing by the offer of all her rings and brooches to overcome the inflexible integrity of Tib Trotter, hopeless and despairing, she knelt down to pray and to weep.

"Come hither, Tib," said Redhall to this niece of his trusty henchman, as he retired; "the young lady, my kinswoman, is, I fear, seriously indisposed; put this powder in her milk posset to-night; but on peril of thy life neither allow her to see or know aught of it."

With a low curtsy, and a downcast glance of the deepest respect, Tib received the little packet, and Redhall hurried back to his writing chamber and his portfolios.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE KNIFE.

"Cunning is a crooked weapon; and nothing is more hurtful than when cunning men pass for wise."

BACON.

THE Earl of Ashkirk occupied an apartment immediately below that of his sister; but one which was certainly of a very different aspect and description.

After their capture, it was not until daylight broke that he discovered he was only in the strong house of Redhall, scarcely a hundred yards from his own gate, and *not* (as he had first supposed) either in the towers of the castle, or the Tolbooth of the city. In the scuffle preceding his capture, he had been so severely handled, as to become insensible; thus, on sense returning, he found, that though the infamous gag (the thought of which made his fierce blood boil with wrath and shame) had been removed, as well as the cords which had secured his hands, his mouth had been severely cut by the iron tongue of the former, and his wrists were swollen and livid by the merciless application of the latter.

The capture of his sister by Redhall, and the certainty that she too was confined in the same mansion among the trained minions and obsequious vassals of

this arch conspirator, sufficiently informed him that his ancient enemy had some ulterior motive, which he could not at that time fathom. Daring as he was, and courageous to a fault, the first thoughts of the young earl were those of terror for his sister, and some little concern for himself. He now saw and regretted, unavailing-ly regretted, his rashness and folly in venturing within the walls of Edinburgh at such a time, when the tidings of his recent raid on the borders were fresh in the minds of the people; and still more did he deplore his second folly, in continuing to abide there, as if in defiance of suspicion and of fate: thus selfishly compromising the safety of his dearest friends as well as his own.

"I must have been mad, and Vipont was worse than mad to permit me! Let me sleep if I can," thought he, "fresh energies will come with slumber; and I, who have escaped from English Norham, and from the castle of Stirling, too, where once old Barncleugh had me fast in the Douglas chamber, will surely find a passage from this house—or the devil's in it!—and adieu my plans of vengeance for a time."

And thus, acting upon principle, the light-hearted young noble, whose bold heart had never known either fear or despair, lay down on the stone floor of his prison, closed his eyes, and courted sleep as if nothing had happened; and sleep came; but his slumbers were a mere nightmare, so full were they of hideous dreams, buffets, and combats; and, more than once, he started with the certainty that he had heard his sister's cry.

"Bah!" said he, "let me sleep. She is her mother's daughter, and hath too much of Black Douglas and the devil in her, to endure insult from such a poor hang-dog as Redhall! Besides, if he dared to——" and he

felt a gleam pass over his eyes in the dark, at the idea that occurred to him.

At an early hour, Lord Ashkirk awoke, and proceeded at once to the examination of his prison. The walls and arched roof were of massive and unplastered stone; the floor was paved; the window and the chimney were grated; while the door, which he sounded with his hand, seemed a mass as solid as could be formed of oak planks and iron bolts.

"Ten devils!" thought he; "at Norham I had the tongue of a waist buckle, and at Stirling a spur of steel; but here are neither buckle nor spur, knife nor nail, to loosen a stone or saw a stanchel."

Between the trees he could see the rising sun gilding the top of Arthur's Seat. The solitary window, which was little more than ten inches square, was crossed by three bars built into the stone; he saw with satisfaction that it was only about fifteen feet from the ground, for his chamber was on the second vaulted story.

"Good!" said he; "this wall is not like the rock of Stirling; but there I stole the cord of the flag-staff."

He heard all the bells of the city ringing for morning prayer: and these sounds of life without made him feel, for the first time, some anger and impatience at the vigorous restraint imposed upon him. An hour after this, although he had not heard the approach of footsteps (so thick and so closely jointed were the walls that encompassed him), the door of his vault was unlocked, and a sturdy fellow, with a Jethart axe, secured to his wrist by a thong, in case of accidents, entered, bearing a pewter basin of water, a towel, &c., for the performance of the morning ablutions. The moment he en-

tered, a door at the further end of the passage was closed and locked; thus securing him, as well as the prisoner, of whose name and rank he appeared ignorant; for with these the politic Redhall had acquainted only his favourite, Birrel, and one or two more on whom he could implicitly rely.

Prolonging his toilette to the utmost extent, the earl scrutinized the visage of his attendant, who was a strongly-built fellow, about five-and-twenty years of age, with a rough red beard, and whiskers that grew up to his high cheek bones, on each of which a bright red spot was visible. He wore his bonnet drawn over his shaggy brows, and his eyes, though of a pale grey, betokened a native sharpness over which the earl saw at once he would be able to achieve very little.

"Well, fellow," said he, "art thou appointed to attend me?"

"Aye, sir."

"Then what is thy name, for I must know it?"

"What would ye be the better of knowing?" he asked, cautiously.

"Very much; as we may see each other often; but, doubtless, thou art ashamed of it."

"Ashamed o' my name? Deil choke sic impudence. No, faith! It is as gude as your ain, and better, maybe. My name is Tam Trotter, and I am forester up bye at Kinkleith, where my father (God rest him!) was forester before me, though folk did ca' him uncanny."

"Well, friend Tam, couldst get me a razor, in addition to this splendid toilette apparatus? I have a fancy for shaving off my beard this morning."

"Aha!" laughed Tam, with a knowing Scots wink, as he seated himself on the table, with his Jedwood axe

under his arm; "I can see as far into a millstone as you, my quick gentleman; so keep on your beard, it will be a warm ruff for you in the winter nights."

"Winter nights! What the devil dost thou tell me? Thy master cannot think of keeping me here till the winter nights come on."

"No here, maybe, but out at Redhall. This morning I rode in with ten braw fellows, with axe and spear, to take ye out there to the auld tower; but lo! his lordship, our master, came home not an hour syne, wi' his doublet drookit in bluid, and his body run through by——"

"By whom?—by whom?" cried the earl.

"The master of the king's ordnance, who (everybody says) is a fast friend of the Lord Ashkirk; but, God's death! if ever the one or the other come under my hands—if I can just get one canny cloure at them—neither will ever need another!" and, setting his teeth, the fellow assumed an aspect of ferocity, and hewed a large piece off the table with his sharp-bladed axe.

"Friend Tam, thou seemest very savage and blood-thirsty," said the earl, in his bantering tone; "but I must request thee to restrain thy troublesome vivacity, and not so damage my furniture, the stock of which is somewhat limited. Ha! ha! and so Vipont hath pinked thy master?—and where?"

"Here—just in the shoulder; but it seems braw news for you," replied Trotter, sulkily.

"The thrust is not near the heart, I hope?" said the earl, almost leaping with joy; "not near his amiable heart—oh, do not say so—I shall quite expire if thou tellest me that!"

"Devil take me, if I ken what to make o' you," said

Tam, with a face half comical and half angry; "for, by my faith, you *are* a queer chield!"

"And thou art a good-hearted fellow?"

"My mother aye says sae, though she bangs me wi' the beetle, for being fonder o' porridge than plowing in the morning."

"So his mother beats him?" muttered the earl; "good!—the fellow is a mere simpleton."

"Is he?" rejoined Trotter, closing one eye, with his tongue in his cheek, and kicking his iron heels together; "try me, and you will see if I am sic a simpleton?"

"Excuse me, friend Trotter; by simpleton, I merely mean one who is neither subtle nor abstruse—nor steeped in guilt, like the rascal, thy master."

"The rascal, my master, hath *you* nicely under his thumb, however," grinned Trotter; "and a civil tongue, sir, would be baith advisable and becoming—a' things considered."

"Well, let us not quarrel. Thou seest this ring—'tis worth three hundred gold crowns of James III.; and it will be thine, if thou tellest me all thou knowest about the lady who was brought here last night."

"Weel—give me the ring, sir."

"'Tis a carbuncle, my friend, that once gleamed on the hand of a gallant earl."

"And it is mine, for all I ken—eh?" said Thomas, contemplating the jewel on the top of one of his great fingers with a leer of satisfaction; "the carbuncle wad be a bonny die for Else' Gair; and 'tis mine, for a' I ken?"

"Yes—yes."

"Then a' I ken just amounts to nothing," said Tam, with a laugh; "so I might cheat you if I chose; but,

though a puir chield (and a simpleton too), I would despise mysel' if I took your ring—so tak' it back, sir——”

“Nay, nay, fellow, I cannot accept it again.”

“Weel, it may lie there on the table, for I winna touch it. Men would say, if I took it, that I had betrayed my master.”

“True,” said the earl, as he replaced the jewel; “but I will be in thy debt three hundred Scottish crowns. And now let me have breakfast; for no vexation was ever so great that it deprived me of my appetite.”

Cold beef, bread, cheese, eggs, fish, and spiced ale, formed a repast which greatly comforted the earl, who saw with regret, however, how scrupulously the single knife that was allowed him was watched and removed by the careful Trotter. But the moment this meal was over, and his attendant had withdrawn, he recommenced a most minute examination of his prison, and was gradually forced to acknowledge, with a sigh of bitterness, that though neither so strong as Norham, nor so loftily situated as Stirling, its capabilities for escape were very limited indeed.”

Several days passed monotonously away.

The earl became horribly impatient; he had shaken every window-bar for the hundredth time; and for the hundredth time also, with the heel of his boot, had sounded every slab of the pavement, and every stone of the walls, but all were solid as a mass of rock.

“Friend Thomas,” said he, half banteringly and half savagely, on the thirteenth day of his confinement, “how long does that prince of villains, thy master, mean to keep me here?”

“As long as he pleases, I suppose.”

“A vague term, that—most unpleasantly so. I should like much to have been a little consulted in the matter;

but as he omitted this politeness, I mean to escape on the first opportunity, and without formality."

"Escape?" reiterated Trotter, with a grin.

"The walls——"

"Are six feet thick, and the window hath three bars, ilk ane like the shaft of my Jethart staff."

"Yes; but some day I may pull out the stones of the wall, or saw through the bars of the window. Have you never heard of such things?"

"Aye have I, when a man had saws, or files, or hammers, but never when he had only his bare hands and nails."

"I will steal a knife from you."

"Will you?" said Trotter, with his knowing wink.

"Thou shalt see; and once through the window, I will drop——"

"Into the draw-well! Ha! ha! my bauld buckie, the draw-well, forty feet deep, is just below it."

"What? Just under my window?"

"Right doon, as a plummet would sink."

"Ah, the devil! What a judicious villain thy master is!"

"You see, sir, that unless you could change yoursel' into a spider or a bumbee, here you maun just byde," replied Tam, with a loud laugh, which galled the earl to the soul; but seeing the futility of anger or hauteur, he controlled his rising temper, and said, in his usual manner——

"Well, let me have dinner; for assuredly I am weary of having nothing to look forward to, but from breakfast to dinner, at mid-day; from dinner to supper, at even; and from supper to bed—and so on. I assure you, friend Trotter, it would tire even a Carthusian."

"And tiresome I find it, too! Cocksnails! I would

gie my very lugs to be again kicking my heels owre Currie Brig, or Kinleith Craig, for I am wearied o' holding watch and ward here, like the javellour of a tol-booth or the warder of a tower."

As Trotter returned with the dinner upon a broad wooden tray, which usually held the platters, covers, and one small knife, the earl contrived to place his chair in such a manner, that the attendant was tripped by it, and stumbled forward, by which the manchet, or small loaf (in those days the invariable substitute for potatoes), slipped from the tray, and fell upon the floor. While Trotter, after depositing the tray, stooped to pick up the manchet, the earl, like lightning, possessed himself of the knife, and thrust it up his sleeve.

"Look again, friend Trotter," said he, removing the first cover, "thou hast dropped the knife, I think?"

"Have I?" said Trotter, searching all round the table. "Surely no!"

"You must have done so, for I vow 'tis not here."

"I could have sworn it was on the trencherboard, when I brought it in," said the fellow, gaping with alarm.

"If you think so, look again."

"By Saint Giles! there is nae knife here!"

"Then quick, call for another, or these dainty pullets will be cold as pebble-stones."

Trotter turned to call for another knife; and the moment he did so, the earl stepped back, and concealed that which he had secured in a nook of the chimney, which had been discovered during a previous inspection.

A second knife was brought by Dobbie, who had heard Trotter call for it.

The earl made an unusually good repast, and as he picked the pullet's bones, and drank his pint of Bor-

deaux, he jested merrily with his attendant, who leant against the door, from whence he cast ever and anon furtive and uneasy glances below the table, in search of the missing article, for he had his own suspicions.

"Take care, my trusty Tam, take care; for now I have got that knife, and I mean to make a good use of it on the first opportunity. Truly thou art a simple fellow, and will be beetled by Redhall, in such wise as thy mother never beetled thee! ha! ha! Zounds! dost thou think this paltry house would hold me, who escaped from the Douglas room at Stirling, where the cardinal confined me after the battle of Linlithgow? I trow not! Be easy; compose thyself, friend Thomas, for I assure thee I have got the knife, and will begone to-morrow."

"In your pockets?" said Tam, advancing.

"Pockets! Nay, dost thou think a gentleman has pockets in his breeches and doublet to hold bread and cheese, like a rascally clown; but come hither, thou mayest feel my garments."

Trotter passed his hands over the breeches and doublet of the prisoner.

"The devil a knife is here," said he, perfectly reassured.

"Nevertheless, I have it."

"Where?"

"In my stomach. Bring me a sword, or lend me thy poniard, and I will swallow them both also. It runs in the family. I had an uncle who could digest cannon balls."

Tam uttered another of his hoarse laughs, and, bearing away the wooden tray, retired, and secured the double doors as usual.

* * * * *

Next morning, at the early but accustomed hour, he

undid the accumulated bolts and locks of the inner doorway (while Dobbie secured the outer), and entered, with breakfast on the trencher.

A cry burst from him, and he started back aghast on finding the place void, for one glance sufficed to show that it was empty.

The earl was indeed gone !

" Ah, the *knife!*" thought Trotter, as he rushed to the window. Every bar was in its place, and the undisturbed cobwebs of years were still woven between them. Not a flag of the floor, not a stone of the wall, appeared to have been displaced ; and, terrified by such a phenomenon, Tam Trotter uttered a stentorian howl of dismay, and fled from the empty chamber.

CHAPTER XXV.

DOUGLASDALE.

"But you, dear scenes! that far away
Expand beneath these mountains blue,
Where fancy sheds a purer ray,
And robes the fields in richer hue,—
A softer voice in every gale,
I 'mid your woodlands wild should hear;
And Death's unbreathing shades would fail
To sigh their murmurs in mine ear."

LEYDEN.

THE sun of a morning in June shone brightly upon Douglasdale, as a valley of the middle ward of Lanarkshire is named—the country of the puissant Douglasses. The pure air, the bright sunshine, the fresh meadows, the fragrant wind that stole along the uplands, were all indicative of that delightful season when the trees are heavy with their richest foliage, and the voices of the mavis, the merle, and the wood-pigeon, are heard within their deep recesses. Under golden masses of the dark green broom, the white hawthorn, and the wild rose, the Douglas water stole, over its pebbled bed, towards the west.

Hot and cloudless, the rays of the glorious summer sun poured over the giant summit of the Cairntable, and played along the pastoral glens below, to be reflected

by the gleam of arms and the glitter of armour descending from those heights which overlook the towers of the Douglasses—the “Castle Dangerous” of chivalry and romance.

The lairds and warders of the various towers which overhung the valley, were all on the alert, and had barred their gates, drawn up their bridges, and prepared their armour, with not the less care, because they could perceive the royal standard with the red lion waving above the copsewood below.

With their swords sheathed and visors up, Roland Vipont and Louis Leslie rode together at the head of their little column, which had passed a peaceful campaign of nearly three weeks in Lanarkshire, without being molested by any one; and, of course without hearing tidings of the Earl of Ashkirk, for whom, as in duty bound, they made the most minute inquiries—Roland being the more rigid in his search, because he believed him to be in safe concealment at Edinburgh. The horses of the artillery looked sleek and well fed; and the cannoneers, with Leslie's hundred men of the guard, had all their harness and arquebusses as bright as on that day when they marched from Holyrood.

“’Slife! but we spend our time wearily! Will nobody fight with us?” said Roland, with a yawn, as they wound down the valley, by the banks of the Douglas. “St. Mary! I feel a violent inclination to maul some of those towers, that from every rock and hill-top look down so saucily on our line of march.”

“What?—the houses of thy Douglas friends?”

“Assuredly.”

“And why?”

“Just to keep us in practice; and because they are held by Hamiltons.”

"Lucky it is, for us, that they are so. Long before this, had the Douglasses possessed the same power in Lanarkshire that they did ten years ago, we had been eaten up."

"True, in 1527, a hundred men, with two pieces of cannon, if they had once ventured into the middle ward on such an errand as ours, had never come out of it again."

"Yet 'tis very hard that no one will just fire one little shot at us, just to afford an excuse——"

"For blowing the house about their ears. A most amiable wish!"

"Thy nag looks weary, Leslie."

"Ah, 'tis a bay I picked up, during our raid against the Annandale thieves last year. My blockhead of a groom lost me a beautiful roan horse, at Leith, last Lammas-tide, where I sent it to be bathed, at sunset, in the sea."*

"Where dost think we will dine, for my stomach crieth cupboard already?"

"At the Barmkyn of Cairntable. I have heard that the gudeman there keepeth open house and free; besides, he is a kinsman of Redhall, and if we empty his girdels and broach his casks, what matter? Is it not for the king's service? and all Scotland knows," added Roland, with a smile, "how zealous the advocate is for the public weal."

"Let us halt here for one moment," said Leslie, reining up his horse, beside a little rustic well, which flowed near a cottage wall; "this water looks fresh and pure; 'tis south-running, too, and I am thirsty as a sack of flour."

* A superstitious custom, suppressed by order of St. Cuthbert's kirk session, in 1647.

"Lintstock, bring hither the flask of French brandy."

From a gun-carriage, Lintstock unslung a large leathern bottle, and brought it to his master, ogling it by the way with all the ardour of which his solitary eye was capable; and thereafter, from his havresack, he produced a beechwood luggie.

"Gudewife," said Leslie, to a woman, who was grinding corn in a wooden quern, at the cottage door, and who wore one of those pointed Flemish caps which had been introduced into Scotland by Mary of Gueldres, "how name you this well?"

"Sanct Bryde's of Dowglass," replied the woman, briefly and sulkily, for she was one of that hostile race.

"A consecrated well! I thought so—'tis fortunate you asked," said Roland; and, after first dipping their fingers in the fountain, they crossed themselves, and then mixing the blessed water with the brandy, took each a draught, and gave a third to Lintstock.

"Hallo!" cried Roland, to a horseman, who came up at a rough trot, and whose grey plaid, blue bonnet, and white Galloway doublet, as well as his gambadoes, or riding boots of rough calfskin, declared him a plain countryman; "a good day, friend. Wilt thou have a tass of brandy?"

"God keep you, my captain—wi' mony gude thanks," replied the horseman, pulling up his nag, which was a strong Flanders mare. "Health to ye baith, sirs," said he, pulling his bonnet well forward, instead of raising it, as he nodded to each knight, and drained the vessel. "By my faith, but that's braw stuff!"

"Ay, I daresay. 'Tis not often the burnt wine of Languedoc runs over thy Lanarkshire throat," said Roland, laughing; "dost thou travel our way?"

"Sir knight, that just depends upon which way yours may be," replied the fellow, drily, drawing his plaid well over his face.

"We are going to the Barmkyn of Cairntable," said Roland, looking keenly at him under his helmet.

"And so am I, sir."

"Well, thy nag seems fresh, and thou art not as we are, cased in armour; so ride fast, I pray you, and inform the gudeman of the Barmkyn that a party of the king's soldiers will halt there about dinner-time—say a hundred men, or so—and that we will thank the gudewife to look well to her larder and kitchen——"

"To kill the fatted calf, and set her best casks a-broach," said Leslie, laughing.

"To select the hens that roost next the cock—the most delicate pullets——"

"To examine her eel-arks—ha! ha!"

"To prepare the most dainty pasties, and highly seasoned patties—ha! ha! ha!" continued Roland, in the same merry tone; "for as both gudewife and gudeman are friends of the good and amiable lord advocate, they cannot but rejoice to make welcome those who come among them on the king's service."

"And in whose name shall I give the message?"

"In the name of Sir Roland Vipont, master of the ordnance."

"Without fail," replied the horseman, putting spurs to his nag, and galloping off; "but may the devil ryve the saul out of thee (and me too), if thou gettest not a reception as warm as auld Bauldy Fleming can give thee!" added Nichol the brodder, for the stranger was no other than he.

"That fellow's laugh bespeaks him a rascal," said Leslie, who had been narrowly observing all that could

be seen of Birrel's face; "how different it was from the broad grin of an honest yeoman."

"Dost think so?" said Roland, looking after him as he galloped over an adjacent brae, and disappeared; "dost thou think he will play us false after our kindness?"

"No, perhaps—but the committal of thy message to a stranger in these times, and in this place, is, to say the least of it, rather unwary. We might be entrapped and cut off."

"A hundred chosen soldiers, with two pieces of cannon—bah! I should like to see any one attempt it, Leslie. We should sell our lives dearly; and yet my mind misgives me sorely, that it was for no other purpose, that subtle villain Redhall sent so small a force into this wild and hostile district."

"Eh, gentle sirs! Gude guide us, your horses are eating a' my corn!" cried the cottager, running to her quern, which she had left for a moment; "shoo! shoo! awa' wi' ye!"

"Well, thou old devil," said Leslie, "may not soldiers' horses eat what they like?"

Roland threw a few pence into the quern; and then, both putting spurs to their horses, hurried after their soldiers, who were now some distance in advance.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BARMKYN OF CAIRNTABLE.

"Dark grew the sky, the wind was still,
The sun in blood arose;
But oh! how many a gallant man
Ne'er saw that evening close!"

Hogg.

A few hours march among the knolls and hollows, which exhibited here and there a solitary square tower, or an old thatched sheep farm, shaded by ash trees, and nestling on the holm land of the strath through which the Douglas winds, brought the soldiers of Vipont to the base of the Cairntable, a beautiful green mountain, sixteen hundred feet in height. One half was darkly rounded into shadow, on the other shone the bright splendour of the meridian sun, which lit up all the windings of the various little pastoral glens, through which the Peniel, the Glespin, the Kinnnox, and other mountain tributaries, flowed to feed the Douglas at its base.

On a small spot of table land, a shoulder of the hill, and sheltered by its giant ridge from the south-west wind, which usually prevails there, stood the fortified grange, or barmkyn, of Baldwin Fleming.

Boasting of his lineal descent from Theobald le Flem-

ing, who is said to have possessed all that country before the rise of the Douglasses, and their gradual acquisition of the whole district, this sturdy retainer of the encroaching Lords of Angus, though neither laird nor lesser baron, but merely a goodman, who held his feu of a feudal chief, and followed his banner in battle, had procured (through the good offices of his kinsman Redhall), a crown charter, empowering him to fortify his farm, which he had done with a strength that made it second only to Castle Douglas, and the envy of all the fierce barons in that warlike district.

This vast building formed an exact square, and had four square towers on each of its four faces. These were all strongly vaulted for holding grain, while the great yard within served for securing cattle. The twelve towers, and the curtain walls between them, were battlemented on the top, studded with loopholes below, and all strongly, though roughly, built with stone quarried from the adjacent rocks.

The most perfect example of a similar edifice now in Scotland, is the fortified grange of Sir John Seton of Barns, which crowns a height southward of Haddington, where its ruined towers resemble the remains of an ancient city, from their strength and extent.

Within the barmkyn, on one side, stood the strong and substantial, but thatched, dwelling of the farmer; along the other three sides were barns, stables, and houses for his men. At a certain distance round the whole, a deep ditch was drawn; the margin was used as a kitchen garden, and was stocked with common pot-herbs, and a few small fruit trees, sheltered by boortree hedges and stockades.

The bridge was up; and opposite the gate stood a clump of large oak trees; and on a branch of one, which

was conspicuous for its size and foliage, the dead body of a man was hanging by the neck, with the gleds flying about it.

"Oho!" said Roland, as a turn of the glen brought him suddenly in view of this goodly farm; "so the goodman of this grange hath a power of pit and gallows! His oaks bear other fruit than acorns."

"A peasant rascal!" replied Leslie; "and yet he tieth a tassel to his tree, like the best feudal lord in the land."

While approaching this formidable edifice, they had heard the distant blowing of bugle-horns, the springing of wooden rattles, and the incessant jangle of a large bell. These notes of alarm, together with the appearance of armed horsemen, galloping in various directions over the green hill sides, lessened the surprise of Vipont and his soldiers, when, on coming in view of the grange of Cairntable, they saw the whole line of its walls glistening with pike heads and glittering with steel caps; while a scarlet banner, bearing the chevron of the Flemings within its flowering and counterflowering of fleurs-de-lys, was unfurled in defiance; for (thanks to the cunning and amiable intentions of Nichol Birrel) such was the dinner prepared by the sturdy proprietor for his unwelcome visitors.

What the tenor of Birrel's falsehoods and misinformation may have been, we have now no means of ascertaining; but they were such, that the gudeman had all his horses secured in stall; his vast herds of cattle in their pens, his stacks of grain stowed away in vault and barn; while all the men over whom he had authority, to the number of three hundred, with their families, were in garrison, and stood to their arms, with the intention of resolutely obeying his orders, whatever they might be.

A brownie, in the shape of a little rough man, with a broad bonnet and long beard, attended the family of Fleming. He rocked the cradles of the infants, and performed various other kind and domestic services; especially foddering the horses and cattle, sweeping the kitchen floor, and filling the waterstoups for the servant girls; all of which self-imposed duties were performed by this goodnatured imp in the night, for the brownie was a being unseen by day; and to propitiate him, a libation of milk and wort were nightly poured into a rude font in the yard, called the *broonie's stane*—for in those days every thrifty housewife set apart a portion of food for the brownie, that his favour and protection, as well as his future services, might be thereby ensured. If a piece of money were left, an eldritch yell announced that the insulted brownie had found it, and fled in resentment—for from that moment he invariably abandoned the family and for ever. This familiar, and usually amiable spirit, with which Scottish superstition furnished the household of every old race, was pacific, generous, and unwearying in his services; but if once offended, implacable in his revenge.

On the night preceding this eventful day, the brownie of Cairntable had been heard to utter the most doleful lamentations, and “the wee manikin with his lang beard and braid bannet,” had been seen (as several of the servitors averred) to pass round the towers of the barmkyn, wringing his hands and weeping piteously, which had caused the gudeman to look well to his defences, and to his horses and armour. Thus in two hours after the arrival of his kinsman’s follower, Nichol Birrel, everything was in fighting order within the grange when the king’s troops approached it.

“Halt!” cried Roland Vipont.

"By my faith!" said Leslie, "we shall have no dinner here to-day, which I regret exceedingly, as this hath all the aspect and reputation of being an exceedingly well stocked grange."

"There is some mistake here. They surely have not seen the royal standard," said Vipont, angrily, as he shaded his eyes with his hand, which was cased in a glove of steel.

"Ah! you wished for some fighting!"

"Just now I wish most for dinner; and so, Balquhan, ride thou forward with a white flag, and make open door for us."

"Dost think I am another St. Colm, to make bolts unbar and doors open, by simply signing the cross?"

"No; but by threatening them with cannon shot."

Leslie tied a white handkerchief to the point of his long sword, and galloped fearlessly forward to the edge of the ditch, from whence he could distinctly see the grim faces that, from under battered morions, peered at him between the embrasures of the wall above; while from the deep-mouthed loopholes below, peeped forth the keen pike-heads, and the iron muzzle of many an arquebuse and pistol.

"Art thou the gudeman of the Cairntable?" asked Leslie of a stout man of great stature, whose polished coat of mail betokened a superiority over the others around him.

"At your service, my braw gallant," he replied, bending over the tower; "but what may your errand be here?"

"To learn wherefore ye receive the king's soldiers in this fashion, with closed gates, and your helmets on?"

"Gif gaff makes gude friends," replied the other, surlily; "but I trow, gif gaff shall make you none here;

so, in God's name, pass on in peace. Here ilka man must just ride the ford as he finds it."

"Dost think we will burn thy house after it hath lodged us, poor devil?" said Leslie, with a lofty and patronizing air.

The buirdly farmer laughed hoarsely, as he looked to the right and left along the strong walls, which were lined by so many tall fellows in helmets and breast-plates.

"Away, away!" said he, waving his gauntleted hand; "what brings ye frae Holyrood to this puir sheep country? It's a gay place that Holyrood! Ah, there are plenty of vacant priories, lay abbacies, captainries of castles, and other braw perquisites to be picked up there; so I marvel mickle that you left so pleasant a climate, to come here among the spirit-broken and impoverished Douglasses, and the fogs o' the Cairntable, where there's nothing but rocks, whinstones, and cold iron to be had."

"Then you will not lower your bridge, and afford free entrance to the king's soldiers."

"If a' the fiends of hell came, I carena a brass bodle; so away wi' ye, or ye may fare the worse. Tell thy captain my name is Baldwin the Fleming—as good a man as he."

"Peasant hound, thou shalt rue this dearly!" replied Leslie, who was about to turn away, when he perceived the rascal whom they had met at Saint Bryde's Well levelling an arquebuse full at him, from a loophole; and he had just time to make his horse rear, so that the ball, which would have pierced his own breast, entered that of the poor animal, which snorted and plunged wildly. Escaping, however, several other balls which whistled past him, Leslie forced it back at full speed to the side

of Roland, where it fell down, and was dead, almost ere the rider could disengage himself from the stirrups.

"To your arquebuses, Leslie," exclaimed Roland, "while I shall unbend my cannon. Ah, white livered cowards!" he added, shaking his clenched hand towards the hostile grange, "I will maul you sorely for this defiance! Soldiers! they are all traitors to the king, for they have fired on his royal standard. To your guns, my brave cannoniers—to your linstocks, and unlimber! Quick! and make me good service against this contumacious villain and his foolish knaves."

While the cannon were wheeled round, the tumbrils cast off, the magazines opened, and powder and shot taken therefrom; and while the cannoniers commenced pointing and charging them home, Leslie formed his hundred arquebusiers behind a knoll, where they fixed their rests into the turf, and opened a fire as close and rapid as it was possible for soldiers to maintain with these cumbrous fire-arms, which carried balls of two, and even three ounces; which were loaded by means of a powder-horn; were levelled over forks; and were fired by means of a matchlock. The reports were loud and deep, and the rocks of the Cairntable repeated them with a thousand reverberations. White as snow, the smoke of arquebuse and pistolette, broke (but at long intervals) from the strong dark walls of the grange, and their balls tore up the soft turf, as they fell among the little band of besiegers, or whistled over their heads; for so well were they posted, that during two hours of incessant firing, not one was ever touched.

"Batter me down the entrance gate!" cried Roland, to his gunners; "'tis easier to punch holes in an oak plank than a stone rampart; so down with it, my brave

cannoniers—for this night we will carry the place by assault, or die in its ditches !”

“ Art thou quite prepared for that ?” asked Leslie.

“ A true soldier is prepared for everything,” replied the elated Vipont ; “ let us only have yonder gate beaten down by daylight, and, with my sword for a wand, I will act your gentleman usher when night falls.”

The cannon were carefully levelled and pointed ; fire flashed from their muzzles ; smoke curled up in the sunshine ; and their reports rang like thunder among the windings of the Douglas. One shot crashed through the massive gate, beating a large hole in it ; the other struck the battlements, and threw down a heap of masonry, which fell, amid a cloud of dust, into the ditch below. Hereupon, high words ensued between old Lintstock and the lance-spesade, whose thumb was placed upon the vent of the culverin, which he was reloading.

“ It ill becomes a gle’ed gunner like you,” Roland heard him say, “ to heed me less than an auld pair o’ boots ; but lang enough before you saw the blessed light o’ day, I had levelled everything like a cannon, frae a quarter Moyenne up to auld Monce Meg herself ; and here now, I will wager you a stoup o’ Bourdeaux, that my next shot will go straight to the keyhole.”

“ Done !” replied the lance-spesade ; “ twa stoups if you like—and here is my thumb on’t.”

“ The lance-spesade levelled the culverin ; applied his right eye to three sides of the breech, carefully adjusted the quoins, and fired. The ball struck a coat of arms above the gate, and threw a cloud of splinters around it in every direction.

“ She throws high,” said the soldier, throwing down his match, discomfited.

Lintstock grinned as he reloaded, and thereafter

applied his single orb to the breech and quoins, looking carefully along the polished brass gun. At that moment the ball of a falconet came whizz from the barmkyn, and was splintered on its muzzle; but the cool old soldier, whose brains had so narrowly escaped being dashed out by it, neither winced, nor appeared the least disturbed in his aim; but took one pace to the left, stretched out his right hand with the match, and in his turn fired. Then, where the dark keyhole of the ponderous gate had been but a moment before, a large round breach was visible, with the sunshine streaming through it. Upon this, a shout arose within the barmkyn, and the shrill cries of women and children were distinctly heard.

"Well done, my true cannonier!" said Roland. "A few more of these bitter almonds, and the gudeman of the Cairntable will be forced to afford us open house, whether he will or not. To thy cannon again, my old Lintstock: for thou hast but one eye—Saint Mary! 'tis the eye of a gazehound. Aim well with your cannon and arquebuses, my gallant comrades—aim well, and level low! There are many good things in yonder walls, all of which are yours by the law of war. How now, my bold Balquhan—art thou shot?" he asked, on seeing Leslie reel.

"As surely as if with an elf-arrow," replied the lieutenant, whose left arm had been wounded by the ball of a hand gun, which had beaten his armour into the orifice, and caused him excessive pain; "but it matters not—four of my best men are lying stiff enough, among the broom, now."

"Zounds! this night's lodgings is likely to cost us dear!—but, 'fore God, I will make it dearer to the rascal who holds yonder barmkyn against us."

With his scarf, Roland bound up Leslie's arm ; and, having decided on his tactics, commanded the arquebussiers to cease firing ; to lie down close under the brow of a knoll, and to reserve their arms and matches for service at night. Meanwhile, the culverins incessantly battered the barmkyn, the gate of which, by the time that the setting sun reddened the wild summit of Cairntable, was beaten down, with a great part of the wall, thus affording an open passage into the heart of the place.

"Thank Heaven, the night will be cloudy and dark !" said Roland, looking at the sky ; " so, by day dawn, I will show thee, Balquhan, the Red Lion waving where the chevron of Fleming floats upon yonder barmkyn. A thousand thanks, my brave cannoniers—and chiefly thou, old Lintstock, for a troop of knights might ride abreast through yonder breach."

"True ; but thou forgettest the ditch," said Leslie.

"Nay ; I have bethought me of that, too."

Black and gloomy the night came on ; a high wind growled along the valley ; and with the deepening obscurity, it seemed as if the brawl of the Douglas over its stony bed became louder ; for its rush was heard distinctly amid the dark and dewy hills, from which it descended into that lonely and pastoral strath through which it winds.

Pale and sharp as a spear-head, a horn of the new moon appeared at times above the black outline of the Cairntable ; and when old Lintstock saw it, he carefully took out his purse (which, however, contained only four of James the Third's black farthings), and, having turned it over thrice, wished himself good luck, according to a Scottish superstition existing unto the present day.

When the gloom had deepened, so that nothing could be discerned of the barmkyn, but its bold outline and

sable towers, standing on a shoulder of the mountain, Roland ordered the arquebusiers to pile their arms, and to tear down the roof and planking of an old barn, that stood near; and thereafter to bind some ten or fifteen of the rafters together with ropes of straw, so that, being laid close together, they should (with the assistance of a few planks) form a temporary bridge, or passage, across the fossé of the barmkyn, the breadth of which, with military exactness, he had measured with his eye.

Two hours sufficed for this, and, about midnight, he prepared to assault the place, resolving to chastise the gudeman severely for his resistance. Notwithstanding his wound, the gallant Leslie insisted on accompanying him, and, armed with a Jethart staff, Lintstock left the cannoneers to follow his master.

As the arquebusiers approached in close order, the glow of their lighted matches must have announced their approach, for, though all was still in the barmkyn, (save the incessant lowing of the cattle in their pens), the moment they were within range, a storm of missiles was poured upon them. Arquebuse and pistolette, hacque, dague and iron-drake, flashed redly upon the darkness of the night, and many an arrow, and many a bullet, whistled among the close ranks of the Guard. Several fell, killed or wounded; but the rest pressed forward bravely, and Roland, with his helmet closed, and sword in hand, led them on.

Thick and fast fell bolt and bullet, and the hearty shouts of the little band of stormers were soon lost in the roar of tumultuous sounds that arose within the barmkyn; for the cries of Fleming's followers and kinsmen, as they animated each other at loophole and battlement; the shrieks of their wives and daughters, the lowing of

the cattle, the barking of dogs, and the ceaseless ringing of a large alarum bell, added to the incessant explosion of firearms, made a united din, that gave a strange horror to a scene which had no other lamps to light its dangers than the flashes of those deadly weapons, which shot forth their contents from every nook and angle of the strong dark walls.

"Down with the posts and planks! Quick—quick!" cried Roland, through his helmet. "Close your ranks, and now again to your arquebuses! Fire, and club them! Club them, and on—on, for Vipont and the King!"

This rude substitute for a bridge was laid, and the ditch crossed, in less time than we have taken to relate it. Shoulder to shoulder, in the gap of the gate and drawbridge, stood a close array of pikemen; but, being somewhat less accustomed to arms than the soldiers of the Guard, they were thrown into immediate confusion by a volley from the arquebuses, which were instantly clubbed against them for close combat.

"Forward! forward!" cried Roland, hewing a passage with his sword, and shredding down the pike heads like ears of wheat; his strength, stature, weight of arm, and admirable coat of mail, rendering him invulnerable, like a knight of romance.

In the court of the barmkyn, and just within the gate, a close and terrible conflict ensued in the dark; for there the sturdy farmer met the assailants in person, at the head of his hynds and followers, all cased in iron, cuirassed and barbed to the teeth.

A powerful man, of vast bulk and height, Fleming was sufficiently formidable, without his other accessories of a coat of mail of the fifteenth century, jagged with twelve iron beaks, and one of those enormous iron-

studded mauls, which were used in Scotland until the battle of Pinkey, where they proved perfectly futile against the Spanish and German hackbuttiars, who were the main means of winning that battle for the English. The giant was giving all around him to death and destruction ; three soldiers, the best men of the Guard, had fallen before him ; for, by three separate blows, their brains and casques had been crushed like ripe pumpkins, before Roland could reach him through the press ; and, with no other sentiments in his heart than those of rage, the blind and clamorous longing to avenge and to destroy that is sure to arise in one's heart at such a time, he fell furiously upon him.

At this crisis, Roland could perceive a man in a close helmet, who, armed with an arquebuse, kept close behind Fleming, and more than once fired in the most cowardly manner over his shoulder. One ball tore the cone of Roland's helmet, and another grazed his shoulder.

"Notch me the head of that rascal with thine axe, Lintstock," cried he ; "and leave me to deal alone with this rough tilter."

Swaying his enormous maul like a giant warrior of the dark ages, Fleming made many a feint, before pouring forth all his strength and fury, by swinging his club from the back of his head in one sheer downward blow, that in a moment would have annihilated Vipont, had he not sprung nimbly back, and escaped it as well as another shot from the fellow with the arquebuse, who killed the lance-spesade, and so deprived Lintstock of his stoup of Bourdeaux. But ere Fleming could recover his guard, Roland darted forward, and by one tremendous lunge drove his long keen rapier through his body, just one inch below the corslet. Fleming fell

instantly to the ground, and the soldiers pressed forward over him ; but as Roland passed, the tremendous grasp of the dying man was fastened on his foot, and he was dragged to the earth, where a furious struggle ensued between them.

In the dark, Roland's fall was unseen by his soldiers, who advanced fighting hand to hand into the heart of the Barmkyn, driving before them the retainers of Baldwin Fleming. Groaning with rage and pain, and wallowing in his blood, the latter rolled over Roland, and retained him in a grasp which gathered fresh energy from the pangs of death, till it seemed to possess the power of an iron vice. One hand encircled his throat ; the other grasped a poniard, with which he made many a fruitless effort to stab him to the heart. Five times he struck, and, glancing from the tempered corslet, five times the dagger sunk harmlessly into the ground.

During this struggle there suddenly burst upon the darkness a broad and lurid gleam of light, that illuminated the whole arena of the barmkyn, its battered gate and ruined wall, its corpse strewn court and striking architecture ; and then Roland could perceive the ghastly visage of that powerful foe who grasped him—powerful even in death, for sight had all but left his glazed and sunken eyes ; yet the vengeance of a demon seemed to burn in his despairing heart, and to add strength to his muscular gripe. In confusion and agony he had dropped his poniard, and now with both hands he clutched Roland's throat, and frantically endeavoured, by compressing his steel gorget, to strangle, since he had failed to stab him ; and with every futile effort, the hot fierce blood welled forth from his gaping wound and clammy mouth.

Tighter and tighter grew that deadly clutch; the yielding steel compressed at last, and Roland felt his eyes starting and his brain whirling, while a thousand lights began to dance before him. An icy terror, such as never had been there before, now thrilled through his heart; he thought of Jane; and made one super-human effort to free himself and to shout for succour; but both failed, and he thought that all was over now and for ever, when the gleam of light which shot through the Barmkyn saved him. For a moment, attracted by this strange glow that flashed upon his sightless orbs, strong Fleming relaxed his iron grasp, and, fatally for himself, permitted Roland to respire.

Bearing in mind his master's injunctions, Nichol Birrel had thrice taken a deadly aim at Roland, and thrice had failed, for his bullets slew other men, when his arquebuse was dashed aside by Lintstock's Jethart axe. Then finding that he was not likely to achieve much by dint of arms, on observing the strange combat between Roland and Fleming in the gateway—a struggle which he alone had observed, a new idea occurred to him; and, rushing to the summit of the walls, he cried:

"The kye! the kye! save your kye! or they will all become the prize and spulzie of the soldiers!" From the parapets he threw down several enormous bundles of blazing straw among the close-packed herds: already excited and terrified by the din of the combat, and the report of the fire-arms, they were at once driven mad and furious by the descent of this burning shower.

Like a living torrent they poured into the court, and rushed through the gateway; in their flight and terror plunging and galloping, jostling, crushing, and goring each other with their horns, as they irresistibly swept

all before them, trampling the dead and the wounded in the mire of their track.

"St. Mary's knot!" cried Lintstock, hewing at their heels with his Jethart axe; "hough and hamstring! tie their legs with St. Mary's knot!"

Five hundred head of infuriated cattle poured from the barmkyn into the dark glen below, where they spread over the mountains in all directions.

Practised to such tactics in the Border war, the blaze of the straw and the wild lowing of the cattle instantly acquainted Roland with what was to ensue; but unable to free himself from the Herculean grasp of Fleming, he suddenly clasped him in his arms. Then by one tremendous effort he dragged his body over himself, and there retained it as a shield from the forest of legs and hoofs that, rushing from the penn, like a living whirlwind swept over them in hundreds for the space of five minutes; but long before the fifth of these minutes had passed, the nervous grasp of Fleming had relaxed, and his fierce spirit had fled. Breathless, panting, and infuriated by the whole encounter, Roland Vipont rose from the gory mud and mire, regained his sword, and with a tottering gait and swimming head looked around him for his followers.

By this time the conflict was over, and his little band of brave soldiers had gained complete possession of the barmkyn, the whole surviving defenders of which had effected their escape by one of those subterranean sally ports with which every fortified house in Scotland was furnished, as a means of secret egress in the last extremity.

The lance-spesade of the cannoneers and fifteen soldiers of the Guard are said to have been slain in the assault.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE POMMEL OF THE PONIARD.

"He gained—he gained (why stops my story?) then,
A deadly opiate from the convent men,
And bore it to his cave."

Marcian Colonna.

"Now, blessed be Heaven and our own stout hands, we have made our quarters good here at last!" said Leslie, at that moment approaching Vipont. "How is this? Zounds! thou cuttest a rare figure, all smeared in mud and mire. Art thou wounded? No reply? Vipont, Vipont, dost hear me? why, thou art mute as a fish. But come with me to the hall, for I have discovered my way there, and what is better, a gallant demi-john of Rochelle, that would gladden the hearts of ten friars; one cup of it will set thee all right; so, come along, my friend."

Confused and stunned by his protracted struggle with Fleming, and the whirlwind that had swept over them, Roland could scarcely articulate a word, and when he did speak, his voice was lost in the hollow of his helmet.

Assisted by Leslie's arm, he ascended a stair to the hall of the barmkyn, where their entrance stilled, for a moment, the uproar and rejoicing of their plundering and half-famished soldiers.

Built in an age when the sole idea on which a Scottish house was constructed was the resistance of armed assault, the walls of the barmkyn were of enormous thickness, and, in the recesses of the deeply embayed windows were little square cupboards for holding household utensils. The vast fireplace contained two tall andirons, which, together with the great dinner-table, and a number of clumsy chairs and buffet stools, formed the sole furniture of the farmer's hall. The strong and bare stone walls were as destitute of ornament as the roof, which rested on twenty-four round stone corbels, and was composed of twelve beams of oak, plainly boarded over, to form the flooring of a vast hay-loft above.

A fox's face and horse-shoe were nailed above the door, to exclude witches; while a cross of elder-tree twigs was fastened above the lintel as a charm against fascination, for the age was full of the wildest superstition.

Torches had been lighted in the tin sconces which hung on the walls; bread, beef, cheese, and every edible on which the soldiers could lay their hands, had been piled on the long table; and, with their helmets off, some were crowding round the demi-john of Rochelle which Leslie had mounted on a binn in the centre of the floor, while others hewed down doors and window-shutters with their swords, and lighting a fire, began to cook with all the eagerness of hungry men. Meantime, a guard and sentinels had been posted on the walls without, in case of a rally or surprise.

On removing his helmet, and imbibing a draught of wine, Sir Roland was completely restored; but he was too much exasperated by the resistance of Fleming and the loss of life he had occasioned, to care a jot for the

manner in which his goods and gear were going to rack and ruin.

"Drink, my soldiers," he exclaimed, as he seated himself on the table, that he might the more easily overlook the frolics and revelry, "to your heart's content; drink deep, for this is the wine of a false traitor; but let drunkards beware of the truncheon that awaits them on the morrow. Lintstock! hallo, Lintstock! where are you, old iron-head?"

"Here, Sir Roland," replied the veteran, who at that moment entered the hall, dragging in a man whose head he was menacing at every step with his Jethart axe, and at whom he darted such scowls of wrath as he could concentrate into his solitary eye.

"A prisoner!"

"Whom I found skulking there without, and whom I am ready to vow on the blessed Gospels, is the loon that thrice levelled his arquebuss at you; and by shooting puir Laurie, our lance-spesade, hath cheated me of a stoup of wine whilk I won lawfully," he added, savagely shaking Nichol Birrel, who gave him a deep glance of hatred from his sullen eyes.

"It would seem to me, fellow," said Roland, who still occupied his elevated seat on the edge of the table, and before whom the soldiers dragged Birrel, "that I have seen thy face before. In the streets of Edinburgh, perhaps?" he added, sternly scrutinizing that worthy, who, having been deprived of arms offensive and defensive, save a small-sword, appeared before them in the attire of a peasant.

"Nay, I am but a puir sheep-farmer of Galloway, and you never set eyes on me before, Sir Roland."

"A lying varlet!" said Lintstock; "we wasted a gude tass o' brandy on ye at St Bryde's Well."

"Oho! I remember thee, now," said Roland, with a terrible frown.

"And so thou art the villain who shot my poor horse," said Leslie.

"This is not the case," replied the dogged ruffian, in some perturbation; "but even if it were so, should a brave soldier commit such acts to memory, Laird of Balquhan?"

"Now, by the devil, my Galloway Scot, how camest thou to know my name?"

Birrel saw his mistake, and remained silent.

"Harkye!" said Lintstock again, "are ye not the runion who drove all the cattle mad, and hounded them out upon the hills? where all the collies and dogs in Lanarkshire will never collect them again; for mony a gude score hae tummelled owre the craigs of the Cairn-table, and are drowned in the Douglas burn."

"Oho, my friend," said Roland, setting down his wine-cup, and gazing sternly on the brutal and bilious visage of his prisoner, every twitch of whose square mouth, and every glance of whose twinkling eyes indicated the mass of bad thoughts that festered in his heart, "the charges are coming thick and fast against thee; so 'tis to thee we owe the loss of our lawful prize—those prime herds and fattened hirsels?"

"Say rather to witchcraft; for ken ye, sir, that when I arrived here, three were found to be elfshot, and the rest were under spell; for the gudeman Fleming was dropping upon their horns the blessed wax of a paschal candle, the half whereof is yet remaining——"

"In the penn; he speaks the truth," said Lintstock, "for I saw it there mysel; but sure as I am a living man, it was you who threw the blazing straw-wisps owre the parapets of the bartizan."

"Well, rascal, and didst thou give my message to the bull-headed proprietor of this dwelling?"

"Yea, Sir Roland Vipont, by Heaven I did, word for word."

"So thou knowest *my* name, too, eh? (hold him fast, Lintstock)—well?"

"And he made me prisoner."

"I verily believe, peasant, thou liest; for the Laird of Balquhan avers that he saw thee on the walls in armour."

"True, for I armed me in my own defence."

"But thou didst thrice try to shoot me, with an arquebuss, as Lintstock here is ready to swear."

"Lintstock hath but one eye."

"'Tis gude as a dozen, d—n ye," growled the old soldier.

"How the devil is it this fellow wears a sword like a French barber?" said Leslie.

"Ay, how is this, thou, who art not a gentleman?"

"I am travelling, and wear it for mine own security."

"A cudgel would better become such a clown as thee; but take it away, Lintstock, and keep it for thy pains. Now, fellow, my mind misgiveth me sorely that thou art playing us a false trick; but as for thy attempts upon my own life, I say let them pass; being done under armour, and in close fray, it would ill become Roland Vipont to bear malice for such trifles—for trifles they are, to man who feeds himself as I do—with the blade of his sword. Though, as thou knowest, man, I might hang thee from one of those beams, for resisting the king's troops, who are empowered" (he added, with a covert smile at Leslie), "to search every stronghold in Douglasdale for the traitor, Ashkirk, I

forgive thee, instead; and, as lord and master of this barmkyn, for one night at least, by the laws of conquest and appropriation, I say thou art welcome to a cup of wine, a slice from yon savoury roast, and a seat by the fire till dawn, when may God speed thee to thy native Galloway, and keep us from again meeting under harness. I never bore malice to living man, for blow struck, or bullet shot, after the fray was over, and so bear none to thee. Now, fellow, what is thy name?"

"John—John Dargavel," replied Birrel, cautiously.

"Then give me thy hand, John Dargavel, and here is mine," replied Roland.

Each kissed his right hand, and presented it to the other.

"This is the generous frankness of a gallant soldier," said Leslie, as Birrel slunk away; "but, I doubt me, 'tis sorely misplaced, for that fellow hath the eye of a very ruffian. St. Mary! I could not have believed my haughty Vipont would have condescended thus—even though a friar had sworn it."

"The faggots of hell encompass thee!" muttered Birrel (uttering the favourite curse of those days), as he overheard Leslie; "but I may, ere the morning, serve my lord and myself by avenging all this! Praise God, I have still my poniard, with ten lives in its pommel!"

He drew near the great fire, and mingled with the soldiers, who were busy spitting strings of pullets, broiling eggs, basting a lordly roast, toasting cheese, and mulling wine, amid such jesting and revelling, as none but soldiers can indulge in after danger dared and slaughter past. There were several among them who no doubt would have recognised him as the witch-pricker of Edinburgh, had they been less occupied with the pleasant task of satisfying their appetite, or had they

more closely examined his face, the vile expression of which was considerably increased by the manner in which he had smeared it with dust and mud for concealment; but Lintstock, who had some undefinable suspicions concerning him, kept a strict watch over all his movements, and never once lost sight of him, even for a moment, during the whole night.

The feasting was over, the demi-john had been drained, fresh guards had been posted, and the soldiers lay down to sleep, for Roland had announced that they were to march by sunrise, and desired Lintstock to prepare a spiced posset of wine for his friend Leslie and himself, against the time when the morning trumpet should sound.

Two box beds opened off the hall, and each officer, without removing his armour, occupied one of them; while their soldiers slept on the floor, lying close together, with their swords and arquebuses beside them; and as the pavement was somewhat cold (even though the month was June), the staves of the demi-john, a few sturdy oak chairs, and several other articles of furniture, had been heaped in the chimney, where they were all blazing in a sheet of flame, like a yule-nicht fire.

Rolled up in his grey maud, Nichol Birrel reclined in a corner of the ingle, with his bonnet drawn over his eyes; but instead of being asleep, as he pretended, he was intently watching the groups that slept around him. In a more remote corner lay Lintstock, partly under the hall table, with his axe and sword under his head as a pillow, and his keen bright eye fixed on the shaggy-headed brodder, who had not the least idea that he was either watched or suspected.

And thus the two men lay, for nearly two hours. The brodder watching the sleeping soldiers, and Lint-

stock watching him. The one-eyed veteran had conceived an invincible mistrust and repugnance of their new acquaintance, and lay awake like a lynx.

The fire began to sink and smoulder; and the objects in the hall, its great and sturdily-legged table, the sleeping groups in their conical corselets and red doublets; the yawning fire-place, and the rough arch of the mantel-piece, the ponderous beams of the ceiling, and the deep embrasures of the windows, assumed various shapes to the half-closed eye of Lintstock. The shadows became black, while a fainter red began to flicker on the walls as the embers died, and everything became grotesquely indistinct.

Sleep was fast overpowering the drowsy veteran; but before yielding to it, he gave one last glance at the witch-brodder, and, starting, grasped the shaft of his Jethart axe.

Birrel had arisen and thrown off his plaid. The last glow of the sinking embers shone full on his strong squat figure, his bilious visage, matted beard, and muscular hands, giving him the aspect of an enormous gnome in their uncertain light.

"Hah! what now, sir?" muttered Lintstock, quietly.

Birrel unsheathed his dagger; the blade gleamed redly in the flame; but instead of grasping the hilt in the usual way, he unscrewed the pommel; and then fortunately a current of wind which streamed down the wide chimney and fanned the embers into a sudden flame, showed Lintstock how he took from the hollow ball a few red grains, and shook them into the posset cup which had been prepared for Sir Roland and his friend, and which stood near the fire upon the warm hearth.

Lintstock grasped his axe tighter.

For a moment the wine posset frothed and foamed in the light; then the fermentation subsided, and with the last gleam of the exhausted fire, Lintstock saw the brodder envelop himself once more in his plaid, and, after stretching his limbs upon the warm ingle-seat, go composedly to sleep.

The firelight had expired, and then Lintstock could perceive the first faint grey of the morning, brightening coldly and steadily beyond the strong iron gratings of the hall windows; and being well aware that the sentinels would permit none to pass without Sir Roland's order or permission, and thus that the captive poisoner could not escape, Lintstock also addressed himself to sleep, for the short two hours that intervened before the usual time of marching.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A DRAUGHT OF WATER.

“How light is my song, as I journey along,
Now my perilous service is o’er;
I think on sweet home, and I carol a song,
In remembrance of her I adore.”

Tannahill.

WITH the first peep of the sun’s red disc above the Cairntable, the trumpet sounded in the court of the barmkyn; and starting at once to their arms, the arquebusiers, with the ready resolution of soldiers accustomed to be roused on a moment’s warning at all hours and in all seasons, hastened from the hall, and began to fall into their ranks in the yard. Many dead bodies, and that of the stalwart Fleming among them, were lying among the mire, where the fugitive cattle had trod them; a lancespesade proceeded to call the roll, while the fourrier broached a cask of ale, from which every man took a long horn before marching.

Roland Vipont was the first who started at the sound of the trumpet.

“Hollo, Lintstock,” cried he: “my sword and helmet, and bring hither the wine-pot. Come forth, my light Leslie; the trumpet hath blown.”

Lintstock brought the posset to his master, who was about to divide it, by pouring a portion into another cup for Leslie; when the wakeful servant whispered in his ear, while lacing on his helmet—

“Hold ye, Sir Roland, and invite our new friend in the border maud to taste of it first.”

“Methinks muddy ale, or ditch-water, would better suit his knave’s throat; but why this request?”

“There hath been foul play in the night.”

“Oho!” said Roland, changing colour, and setting down the cup; “do you say so?”

“Poisoned?” asked Leslie, in a low, fierce voice.

Lintstock winked, and nodded towards Birrel, who, at that moment, for the third or fourth time, was endeavouring stealthily to leave the hall, with the last of the soldiers.

“Come hither, friend Dargavel,—for so I believe thou callest thyself,”—said Roland, filling a wooden bicker from the large pot of mulled wine; “is it thus thou stealest away without bidding adieu to me, who am thy host; for thou knowest that I command all here while within the walls. Come, drink with us, friend; ’tis a bad maxim to ride with a fasting stomach, so thou art welcome to a share of this posset, which has simmered overnight by the fire. Dost thou hear me, fellow? Art thou deaf?”

Birrell’s visage turned deadly pale, and a perspiration suffused the roots of his hair and matted beard.

“I never drink ought that is stronger than water—never, at any time,” said he, with a quavering voice.

“This is false,” said Leslie; “for I saw thee dipping thy moustachios, yea, and thy whole beard, in the demi-john last night.”

"True—but in the morning I never drink either ale, wine, or usquebaugh—never, sir knights—wi' mony gude thanks for your courtesie."

"Tarry with us, friend; be not in a hurry," said Roland—at a sign from whom Lintstock placed himself in the doorway—"of what, in the devil's name, does thy morning draught usually consist?"

"Milk," replied Birrel, becoming blanched with fear, and looking round for some friendly hole wherein to hide himself.

"A very hermit in temperance! I regret that, in consequence of all the cattle having escaped, we cannot accommodate you, my pretty man, with a draught of your favourite beverage. But hark you, sir," said Roland, unsheathing his formidable sword; "thou seest this blade?—well, if thou dost not drain this cup of wine to the bottom, I will pass this weapon to the hilt—yea, sirrah, to the very hilt, through thy body!"

"Of all the sights of horror and disgust," says a popular writer, "villany transformed at the death hour into its natural character and original of cowardice, is among the most appalling." The witch-finder trembled in every limb, and seemed frozen to stone by this command.

"Ha! thou unfanged reptile, so we have thee by the throat?" cried Roland, withdrawing his keen, sharp weapon for the death-thrust; "off with it, to the dregs—yea, to the very dregs?"

The tongue of Birrel clove to his palate, for the fear of death and love of life were strong in his breast; he had dropped ten grains into the goblet—and he remembered the words of his master, that *each grain* was the life of a man. He gasped for breath, but could

only utter inarticulate murmurs. He turned towards the doorway, and there stood Lintstock with his eye full of ferocity, and his axe uplifted.

"Harkee, hound! dost thou hear me?" said Vipont, spurning him with his foot.

"Oh, Sir Roland, have mercy, have mercy!" The servant is not responsible for what he does by the orders of his master."

"A pleasant rascal this!" said Leslie. "So thou hast a master, eh?"

Birrel stammered, and paused; for, villain as he was, he meant not to betray Redhall.

"Think not that, by divulging his name, thou wilt save thy hang-dog life!" said Roland—who mistook his delay—"for I swear by the God that is in heaven! if thou drainest not this draught to the very bottom, I will run thee through the heart without more preamble. So quick! quick! swallow, swallow! dost think we have time to trifle about crushing a reptile so despicable as thee!"

The villain sank upon his knees, for they refused to sustain his weight; fear froze the very pulses of his heart, and palsied his tongue; his countenance became livid and clayey; his eyes sank, and his lips became blue.

"How frightful this villain is!" said Leslie. "Did ever a brave man look thus in the face of death?"

"Mercy, sirs! mercy! I will sin no more; I will be a gudeman and true—I will tell you all—my master's name—but mercy, sirs! mercy!"

"Thy master's name! we seek it not," said Roland, as he smote him on the mouth with his gauntleted hand; "we seek it not; for then our honour would

compel us to slay him wherever we met him, by holm or hillside, at kirk or in market; and I wish not to stain my father's sword with the blood of villains."

"A priest! then let me have a priest! but five minutes wi' a priest! for oh, I have mickle to say, and muckle to repent o'!"

"Dog! thou art a Protestant, I believe, and requirest not a priest. No, go down to thy grave with the curse of the God of the living and the God of the dead on thy brow—that dogged front where the mark of hell is written! Drink! drink! dost thou hear me, Cain?"

Roland held the dreadful cup before his eyes by one hand, while, with the other, he gave him a violent prick in the breast with the point of his sword.

Birrel uttered a shriek like a fiend; and, draining the cup to the bottom, flung it full at the face of Roland, who stooped his head, and the wooden vessel was dashed to a thousand shreds on the opposite wall.

"Now I have but two hours to live!" he cried, with the voice of a damned one; "two hours! two hours! two hours!" and, darting through the doorway, he hurled Lintstock from his path as he would a child, and, with one bound, sprang down stairs into the courtyard, where he passed through the startled soldiers like a whirlwind, with his visage overspread by the blue pallor of death, his mouth covered with foam, and his matted hair streaming in elflocks behind him.

Snatching up a cord that lay in his path, he cleared the fossé with one bound, like an evil spirit; and uttering a succession of frightful cries, plunged down the steep bank, towards the rough, rocky bed of the Douglas.

"How now! is the fellow going to hang himself?" said Roland.

"Faith, poisoning might surely satisfy him," replied Leslie.

Master Birrel certainly was about to hang himself, but *not* by the neck.

"I must live—I must live—oh, yes, I must, for vengeance!" he yelled; for, coward as he was, he felt that he could have died happy, if, by so doing, he could destroy Roland Vipont and Jane Seton—yea, and his master too, who had sent him on an errand so fatal in its termination.

While some of the soldiers were burying the dead, and others were tracing the horses to the artillery, the poisoned ruffian ran wildly to a solitary part of the river, where he threw himself on his face, and imbibed an inordinate draught of cold water—drinking, drinking, drinking—as if he was a mere hollow pipe. Loosening his waist-belt, and untying the points of his doublet, he stooped and drank deeply again, burying his face in the water until his distended stomach felt swollen as if to bursting, and when he arose the whole landscape swam around him. Then, selecting the branch of a tree, he clambered up to it with the utmost difficulty, for he had turned himself into a mere water barrel.

Then, in a horror of anxiety—for every moment wasted seemed an eternity—he tied his ankles to the branch, and lowering his body perpendicularly till his hands rested on the turf, he remained suspended, head downwards, in the hope that, with the ocean of water he had drunk, he might disgorge the frightful poison he had been compelled to swallow. But long before this hideous operation was over, Roland Vipont, Leslie, and their soldiers, with the royal banner displayed, and

their bright armour gleaming in the sun, were marching down the pastoral valley, on their route to Edinburgh, having now traversed the whole dale of the Douglas *without* discovering the Earl of Ashkirk.

"Now, fare ye well, Lanarkshire, and welcome the dun summit of Arthur's Seat," thought Roland; as, full of the most brilliant anticipations of happiness, he spurred his gallant horse and patted its arching neck. "In three days I will be with my dear Jeanie; and, in a month from this, whether the king sayeth yea or nay, she shall be my winsome bride!"

END OF VOL. I.





